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INTERNET-MEDIATED INTERCULTURAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CHINA'S HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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October 2010

Dedication

To the memory of

Elizabeth Bird

for her warm welcome to my first day in the OU
and care, support and friendship.

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Abstract

In the information age, the advent of Internet technologies has made it possible to transform language learning and teaching, through online intercultural exploration and exchange. The role of English as an international language in global communication is recognised in China's latest national guidelines for tertiary language curricula, which seek to develop professionals possessing both sound language proficiency and intercultural competence, alongside other goals such as information literacy and learner autonomy. This thesis examines the actual delivery of an intercultural dimension mediated by Internet technologies.

To this end, this thesis reports an investigation into the situation of Internet-mediated intercultural English language teaching and learning at China's higher education institutions conducted between 2008 and 2009. Multi-stage and multi-site fieldwork combined a survey approach and a collective case study approach. The researcher being the primary data collection tool, data obtained from questionnaire survey, interview (and informal conversation), observation and document collection instruments have been combined. The survey findings thus not only have breadth, but also provide materials for in-depth studies of sample cases.

Four cases, demonstrating a variety of institutional, individual, pedagogical and technological factors, are analysed at greater length to explore whether evidenced Internet-mediated practices might facilitate an intercultural approach to teaching and learning. Comparisons suggest that, despite their differing characteristics and contexts, there are some commonalities in terms of Internet-mediated activities entailing elements of an intercultural approach. These elements are synthesised and mapped out in an original pedagogical framework for Internet-mediated intercultural teaching and learning, with a set of guiding principles. This framework advocates establishing *an Internet-mediated intra-class community* as the basis for undertaking intercultural language activities, complementing the prevailing telecollaborative model for the development of intercultural communicative competence. This outcome contributes to a fuller understanding of the design of Internet-mediated intercultural language activities.

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Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| CALL | Computer-Assisted Language Learning |
| CC | Communicative competence |
| CET | College English Test |
| CLT | Communicative language teaching |
| CMC(L) | Computer-Mediated Communication (for Language) |
| CNNIC | China Internet Network Information Centre |
| EFL | English as a foreign language |
| EIL | English as an international language |
| ELT | English language teaching |
| FLE | Foreign language education |
| FLT | Foreign language teaching |
| FLTRP | Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEI | Higher education institutions |
| IC | Intercultural competence |
| ICC | Intercultural communicative competence |
| ICFLE | Internet-Mediated Intercultural Foreign Language Education |
| IDE | Institutes of Distance Education |
| ILT | Intercultural learning and teaching |
| INCA | Intercultural Competence Assessment |
| JPKC | Jing ping ke cheng (quality curricula programme, or quality course) |
| NBLT | Network-based Language Teaching |
| NNS | Non-native speakers |
| NSCE | New Standard College English |
| SLA | Second language acquisition |
| TELL | Technology-Enhanced Language Learning |
| TEM | Test for English Majors |
| TESOL | Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 *Rationale*

This thesis, investigating Internet-mediated intercultural English language education at China's higher education institutions (HEIs), has a double motivation. Firstly, with my English language teaching (ELT) background, I am committed to the development of China's foreign language education (FLE) in the information age and in response to globalization. The latest national syllabuses for both English language students and non-language students require that learners acquire and cultivate not only sound language proficiency, but also creativity, integrative cultural literacy and information literacy (MoE 2000, 2004). How this aim can be achieved remains an open question. Secondly, this interest initially sprang from two emails from a previous student of mine some years ago, when I first came to the UK and started with an interest in educational technology for language teaching, and intercultural theories and pedagogies.

Briefly, in his first email, my student asked for advice about how best to handle an email invitation for lunch sent by a British acquaintance who was coming to China on business. He had decided to go but was uncertain about who was to pay for the lunch because in Chinese culture a host should entertain a visiting guest. He also knew (probably thanks to my class) that it was possible to 'go Dutch' in English culture. However, as a student, he had no income and expected his British friend to pay for the lunch since it was the latter who had issued the invitation. Hesitantly, he turned to me for help. I advised him to engage in further communication and negotiation if possible. In his second email, which was sent to me one month later, he told me that he had missed the lunch because he could not get access to his email account to read either my reply or the messages from his British friend

for a while, by which time his British friend had already left China. He felt very sorry about the technological breakdown and the subsequent missed opportunity.

Although this is only a single case, it was interesting to see that: 1) culture learned as background knowledge does not necessarily help students to interact and mediate in real intercultural encounters, be they face-to-face or virtual; 2) the availability of technology does not automatically facilitate intercultural communication (my student's initial response was to turn to me for help), nor does it guarantee smooth communication, even technically.

As the number of interesting Internet technologies has mushroomed, I have become ever more fascinated about exploring the potential of these new technologies for language learning and intercultural communication. I myself have been studying and conducting research between Europe (UK-based) and China, using Internet tools such as Google mail, MSN, and Skype, for communication with people from different parts of the world, and responding to my previous students' and friends' constant efforts to push me to adopt the latest networking tools and join in various online communities. All these benefits provide a sharp contrast to my old days as a language student suffering from the inadequacy of learning resources and language learning (and use) environments in a then largely monolingual China. Beyond that, I have become a proponent of the use of the Internet for intercultural learning.

In spring 2006, I ventured to test my idea of an online intercultural exchange (O'Dowd 2007a) programme within a collaborator's language class in a university in China. I enthusiastically designed a web-based programme called 'Culture CoffeeTea', under the influence of '*Cultura*' (Furstenberg, Levet, English and Maillet 2001) and the INCA (Intercultural Competence Assessment) project, to contribute to her class with the aim of

putting the students in contact with a group of volunteers from a British university who were interested in learning Chinese for intercultural exchange. However, this endeavour was nearly stifled at birth by both external and internal pressures. For one thing, the volunteers in the UK did not keep their interest going for long and dropped out quickly after the start. It was difficult to find enough participants to replace them at short notice. For another, the Chinese students were unhappy about the project assessment scheme applied to them, which was quite different to the institutional one. Although remedial strategies were used, the project was turned into an optional training programme in which the communication function was deactivated (see Wang 2010).

Such an experience mirrored O'Dowd's (2003, 2006) warning that it would be dangerous to blindly march students into a new and unknown world. O'Dowd (2003) and Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) also emphasize the impact of socio-institutional factors that influence decisions about adopting online intercultural teaching and learning. I became aware that without a good understanding of the interplay between institutional, individual, pedagogical and technological factors in an educational context, a motive driven by instinct would be quixotic. While the advance of Internet technologies affords the pedagogical possibilities for intercultural language teaching and learning, it is the political aspirations and local visions of education that form the actual social context for teaching and learning practices informed by technology. With this in mind, I conducted a small-scale research survey in 2007 to establish a general understanding of the situation in China's tertiary FLE with respect to the implementation of an intercultural communicative competence (ICC) goal and the use of Internet technologies among teachers and students (see Wang and Coleman 2009).

To add depth and breadth, I undertook the present study to investigate the manifestation of ICC dimensions, the use of Internet technologies, the factors shaping use within local contexts, and evaluated whether such Internet-mediated practices facilitate an intercultural approach to teaching and learning. These ideas are further discussed as the thesis develops.

1.2 *Outline of thesis*

The thesis is organized as follows: Chapter 1 presents the rationale and background to the study with a specific account of the Chinese tertiary FLE context. Chapter 2 contains a review of relevant literature in relation to teaching English as an international language, intercultural communication and pedagogy, research on the development of an Internet-mediated intercultural approach to language teaching and learning in international and Chinese contexts. Chapter 3 discusses methodological issues including research design and rationale, data collection methods and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 reports on my experience of fieldwork, with regard to participants, procedures, challenges and strategies, and offers a reflection on how the fieldwork experience enriched and empowered this research. Chapters 5 and 6 contribute to data presentation and analysis, the former presenting data from the first round of fieldwork (mainly a survey) and the latter concentrating on four case studies in the second round of fieldwork. Analytical frameworks of each fieldwork stage will be demonstrated with concrete data. In Chapter 7, discussions of the data, made in connection with the literature and the main findings, are mapped out in order to illustrate a pedagogical framework tailored to Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning that includes the Chinese context. Finally, in Chapter 8, findings emerged from the study are summarized, implications for policy and practice are highlighted and the limitations of the study are addressed.

1.3 Tertiary English language education in China

1.3.1 The social-historical context

English language in China has experienced highs and lows in interaction with local communities. Historically, English had been associated with religious intrusions, political interventions and military actions from the West against China since the late Qing Dynasty (Adamson 2004). On the positive side, China began to cast eyes on the rest of the globe through the language, no longer seeing itself as the centre of the world. Open-minded intellectuals started to learn about and through the English language in order to strengthen China's science and technology; on the negative side, however, China felt hugely threatened by a cultural influx and until the 1980s the English language was thought of as a tool of imperialist invasion. Only after the Reform and Opening-up Policy, fostered by the late Deng Xiaoping since 1978, has English become more culturally and commercially oriented while the pursuit of English language skills has become an ever-growing need for Chinese people in many walks of life (Adamson 2004; Dai 2008; Wang 2008), from international trade to travelling, from overseas study to local job seeking.

With the increasing importance of China's role in the international community, English language teaching in China has progressed in line with other aspects of modernization and increasing participation in world affairs (Jin and Cortazzi 2002; Dai 2008; Wang 2008). While the national language ideology tends to see the English language as a channel to China's overall national Renaissance (Dai 2008), an increasing number of enthusiastic English language learners believe that they will gain better career prospects as long as they master the language. Whatever the motivation is, English language in China has been boosted with a high profile from education to entertainment.

Much attention has been given to developments in English language education (as well as many other languages) at both official and social levels. Officially, the three-decade period following Reform and Opening-up in 1978 has witnessed great achievements in systematising English language education in terms of language teacher education, curriculum design, teaching materials development, pedagogical innovation, technological integration and assessment methods (Dai 2008: vi). Socially, English language has taken root in local life, and state-run institutions alone cannot provide adequate educational resources for English language learning. Socially-initiated professional language training such as Li Yang's Crazy English and the New Oriental Education and Technology Group has mushroomed across China, in addition to English study blitzes launched by the government at various levels for hosting international events like the 29th Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and the 41st Shanghai World Expo in 2010.

Of relevance to this study is the formal sector of English language education at tertiary level. This is still the mainstream of the national move towards internationalisation.

1.3.2 English language education at the tertiary level

In China, higher education institutions mainly comprise five types, i.e. comprehensive, language-focused, normal, college/institute, and international partnership institutions, all of which are requested to undertake some English language teaching. These institutions are geographically spread across China, mainly located at key cities that are culturally and economically developed as compared with the rest of their regions. While the first four are state-run and have been in existence for a long time, the last category is more a recent emergence due to China's opening its educational market to the world (CEAIE 2004). Another sector which is often marginalized in the higher education system despite continuing growth is distance education, traditionally represented solely by Radio and TV

Universities (since 2009, renamed as Open Universities in English) at various levels, more recently joined by Institutions of Distance Education (IDEs) affiliated to conventional universities. So far there have been over 900 bachelor-level English language teaching sites established within higher education institutions (Dai 2008: v).

Regardless of the institutional type, English language education can be divided into two sectors: 1) language students specializing in English (known as English majors) and 2) public English for non-language students (known as non-English majors or students of College English). In both sectors, English is an essential examination (Jin and Cortazzi 2002): English majors need to pass the Test for English Majors Band-4 (TEM-4) at Year 2 of their four-year undergraduate study; TEM-8 is considered the highest level of English proficiency test and English majors are often expected to pass in order to get a professional job. Students of other disciplines need to pass the College English Test Band-4 (CET-4) in order to graduate (Jin and Cortazzi 2002; Shi 2006) and Band-6 as a pre-requisite for postgraduate entrance examinations. Although the Ministry of Education denies a formal link between CET-4 and obtaining a bachelor's degree, in practice almost all universities demand it (Shi 2006: 28).

English majors need to complete a series of compulsory modules centred upon language skills (i.e. reading, writing, speaking, listening and translating), literature and cultural studies (e.g. American/British Contemporary Literature) as well as a number of optional courses (e.g. a second foreign language course, Intercultural Communication, and English for special purposes). With regard to the goal of English language education for English majors, there has been a debate between the long-standing vocation-oriented education perspective and the elite-oriented liberal education perspective (Hu and Sun 2008). The vocational view has been influential since the 1950s, focusing on language proficiency

enhancement (50s – 70s) and integrated skills with language proficiency plus knowledge of a special discipline (80s – 90s). The elite view, which aims to cultivate all-round talents with humanistic background through liberal education, however, has been ignored for decades (Zhang 2006; Hu and Sun 2008) and still remains less popular, especially given the process of commercialization of higher education (Hu and Sun *ibid.*). Compared with English majors, non-English majors are only required to take College English programme (a compulsory module primarily includes a reading-writing course and a listening-speaking course) for two years; optional credit-bearing courses such as Business English or Intercultural Communication are also available, depending on the institutional provision.

Despite the difference and intensity in courses, both national guidelines for English and non-English majors have a similar goal, that is, to cultivate professionals possessing sound language proficiency, ‘跨文化交际能力’, creativity and the ability to solve problems (MoE 2000, 2004); the difference between them is a matter of degree of speciality. Central to this thesis is the examination of the goal of developing ‘跨文化交际能力’ (literarily translated as ‘intercultural communicative competence’ in this thesis). However, it is unclear what this goal entails and what its specific objectives are (Zhang 2007; Song 2008; Wang and Coleman 2009). Some vague descriptions relate to tolerance, empathy and open-mindedness (MoE 2000). A later document (Dai 2008: x) states that those who have graduated under the new guidelines are expected to be able to:

- think carefully in foreign languages
- adapt to economic globalization processes and social challenges by using both Chinese and foreign languages
- be critical and systematic in reasoning
- communicate with intercultural awareness

- use foreign languages to work innovatively and independently
- deal with foreign affairs with ideological and moral qualities
- compete against and cooperate with international society
- be critically aware of foreign cultures
- be familiar with Chinese and foreign thinking
- observe different disciplines, cultures and philosophies with an integrative perspective

It can be seen that although the descriptors are not clearly defined, an intercultural dimension has emerged as a guide to China's FLE, which sees '跨文化交际能力' as an ability to interact with and mediate between 'Chinese culture' and 'foreign cultures' critically. It is this dimension that has attempted to restore liberal education within English language education. This shift, if correctly understood and properly implemented, will make a significant difference to China's English language education in the future. A further discussion of an intercultural dimension will be developed in Chapter 2.

1.3.3 The rise of the network for English language education

With the advent of computer and network technologies, the Chinese government, among many other governments, feels increasing pressure to stand firm among the waves of 'knowledge-based and information-intensive global economy' (Li 2002: 13). According to the China Internet Network Information Centre (CNNIC), surveys report an ever increasing population becoming 'Netizens' (Internet users) over the past decade. By 30 April 2010 the estimated total number of Netizens in China amounted to 410 million, accounting for 30.7% of the national population, almost 50 times more than in 1999 (CNNIC 2010). However, the use of the Internet in China is dominated by entertainment

and communication (Bucher 2004; CNNIC 2010), characteristically among young people (less than 25 years old, according to CNNIC). Zhu and Wang (2005: 52) have identified a feature of the domestic, or 'locally-oriented', use of the Internet, which is similar to the phenomenon that Bucher (2004) calls a 'Chinese Internet'. Huang, Jiang and Zhang (2007: 229) observe that despite some 800 HEIs connected by the China Education and Research Network on campus the use of the network for administrative and service purposes far outgrows the use for teaching purposes.

Socially, the use of the Internet has also been affected by the controversial issues of political and commercial manipulation of the Internet from both inside and outside China (Bucher 2004), such as the Google-China dispute (during this research fieldwork, access to Google China was unrestricted) and the installation of 'Green Dam' filtering software. However, these inconveniences do not seem to impede the pace of 'educational informationalization' (Huang et al. 2007) in China's education sector. The Chinese government has realised that a well-educated workforce with good information literacy will play a significant role in developing and sustaining the economic strength of any country. Practically, the government regards this transformation as a way of offsetting the inadequacy of educational resources for the enrolment expansion caused by heavy population burden (Chen 2003, in Huang et al. 2007). In view of this, all levels of educational institutions have been urged to make efforts to integrate information and communication technologies, especially the network (including the Internet and intranet), into their educational agendas. This is particularly the case in HEIs.

With regard to English language education at tertiary level, the guidelines (MoE 2000, 2004) have proposed setting up computer and network-based learning as a basic national policy for modern education, and to transform the traditional education that is 'teacher-led,

classroom-dependent and textbook-based' (Gu 2002). This policy suggests that a blended learning scenario should be encouraged, i.e. the integration of a conventional face-to-face mode of course instruction (in class) and an online learning and interaction (usually after class) mode. Compared with the English Major education sector, the College English sector feels a greater urgency to reform its teaching mode as a response to the rapid expansion of student enrolment, limited availability of teaching resources and channels of distribution (Shi 2006). It is generally believed that computer and network technologies can enhance learner autonomy (Dai 2008; Wang 2008), enrich the class with better resources and reduce teachers' workloads. Interestingly, while asserting the aim of encouraging learners' autonomous learning, the computer/web-based mode set out in the guidelines (MoE 2004) strongly resembles a behaviouristic approach to language pedagogy which is very structurally rigid, or 'programmed' (Shi 2006: 65-66).

An official effort to construct online teaching and learning materials is the national initiative known as '精品课程 (JPKC)', literally translated as 'Quality Curricula Programme' launched in 2003 (Huang et al. 2007: 226). The main purposes of this nationwide JPKC initiative are to enhance the pedagogical quality of courses and to share quality-assured resources across institutions. Bids for the development of the proposed courses are examined by a team of expert inspectors and the successful ones will be labelled as 'Quality' products. Among the courses, English courses are one of the main characters in the matrix of the JPKC series, and include, for example, literature courses, College English courses, and Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication courses. Regardless of the content, the websites often adopt a template that includes teaching materials (textual and audio-visual), plans, tasks, and evaluation as well as discussion platforms which are password protected. By May 2010, the officially recognised JPKC at national level amounted to 3,020 courses, among which foreign language-related JPKC courses, mostly

in English, accounted for nearly 15% (444). Another recent effort is the joint production of course materials and their online learning platforms by academics and ELT textbook publishers both in China and abroad. For example, the New Standard College English (NSCE) series, piloted and published in 2008 by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press (FLTRP) and Macmillan Publishers, advocate the blended use of course books with an interactive learning management system to facilitate the development of learner autonomy and integrative cultural literacy (FLTRP 2009).

In addition to blended learning scenarios, there is also distance learning, or e-learning in the Chinese context (Kang and Song 2007: 11), scenario that accommodates learners at work and students who do not attend formal higher education but still want to pursue further education. Mainstream online delivery is replacing radio, television and conventional correspondence. Altogether 68 universities, including Open Universities, have been authorised to set up distance education programmes since the early 1990s (*ibid.*). English language education offered through a distance learning mode is primarily a matter of converting printed materials to electronic ones on course websites (Gu 2002) as well as uploading teachers' pre-recorded lectures at host universities so that distance students can access them online. More recently, official initiatives, i.e. eChina-UK Programme developing e-learning policies, modules, materials, pedagogies and methods have been jointly launched between higher education institutions in China and UK, represented by the Chinese Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) (Spencer-Oatey 2007). This intercultural collaboration has greatly contributed to not only the development of quality curricular programmes, but also the formulation of intercultural partnerships for professional development.

In terms of technological infrastructure, multimedia-equipped classrooms are not a luxury to most institutions. It is common practice for conventional classrooms to be equipped with a teacher-controlled computer, which can be connected to the Internet. There are also networked computer rooms (affiliated to or separate from libraries) where students can go online, linking to both local area networks and the Internet. Wireless connection is available at some institutions. Another resource is that nowadays many student residences are provided with a broadband connection allowing student access to the Internet. However, using computer and network services either on campus or in student accommodation is not free and students are charged on an hourly basis in state-run universities.

This chapter has presented the rationale for my research, which arose from a combination of a sense of social commitment and personal interest. It also provided a socio-historical context of English language education in China's HEIs so as to facilitate an overall understanding of the research background.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Overview

The chapter comprises five main sections. Firstly, I present the global background, which is that English is seen as an international language, and explore the implications this has for approaches to English language education. Next, I focus on the philosophical and pedagogical issues for adopting an intercultural approach to English language education. Following that, I examine both the contribution and the challenge offered by the Internet to the development of an intercultural approach to English language education. These discussions then serve as a prism for the examination of China's tertiary English language education, with particular reference to research on intercultural approaches to FLE and Internet-mediated teaching and learning practice. Throughout the discussion, possible lacunae in the research are identified and I conclude by proposing a number of outstanding research questions.

2.2 *The English language and globalisation*

2.2.1 English as an international language

In a recent special issue of *Language and Intercultural Communication*, Gu (2009: 139) has presented 'a synthesis of current thinking on English as an international language (EIL) and its conceptual implications for the practice of English language teaching (ELT) and learning'. Despite coming from a wide variety of professional backgrounds and positions, the authors agreed that the spread of English as a means of international communication in global communities is a reality (ibid.). Among terms such as World Englishes, English as a

global/world language and English as a medium of intercultural communication (see Seidlhofer 2005), the status of EIL, or English as 'a global lingua franca' (ibid.: 339), has been fostered in the age of information because '[e]lectronic communication provides another source of global exposure of English' (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008: 16).

This phenomenon poses the critical question of the role of culture in teaching English in diverse international situations, with two 'conflicting' trends in evidence, i.e. 'the blurring of national and linguistic boundaries' and 'the emergence of regional thinking and the revival of ethnic and regional cultures' (Kramsch and Sullivan 1996: 200). On the one hand, in its spread across national, cultural and ethnic borders the English language carries - encoded within it - values and beliefs, which inevitably intertwine and even clash with local ways of life. On the other hand, the English language is already adapted in diverse ways to local contexts (Kramsch and Sullivan 1996; Gu 2009). These two paradoxical trends challenge 'old thinking about culture' (Holliday 2009: 145) which is rooted in the ideology of native-speakerism (Holliday 2005, 2006, 2009). They necessitate the re-conceptualisation and re-contextualisation of English as an international language, with implications for local policies and pedagogies (Nunan 2003; McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008; Gu 2009).

Nunan's (2003) survey of Asian-Pacific countries and regions showed that the recognition of English as a global language had a significant impact on policy, such as the earlier introduction into the curriculum of the learning of English as a compulsory subject and the adoption of English as the teaching language in non-language programmes in China. Kramsch and Sullivan (1996: 200) also point out that many learners of English harbour the 'dream of [entering] better worlds' through the use of English and that such a social drive influences the formation of educational policy. In practice, despite local variation, the

appropriation, or localisation, of English to serve the purpose of both global and local interaction and communication has already become the reality (Kramsch and Sullivan *ibid.*), which means that it is vital that appropriate pedagogies be developed to support a new paradigm for teaching EIL (Gu 2009; Rubdy 2009; Saraceni 2009).

Within a framework of EIL, Kramsch and Sullivan (1996: 199) raise questions about the once unproblematic notion of 'authentic' language, including, most centrally: 'whose words and whose culture comprise authentic language'. They argue that even the notion of 'appropriate language' needs to be examined, because 'what is appropriate in an international context may not be appropriate in a local context' (*ibid.*). Thus, in language learning, it is proposed that appropriate pedagogies should be developed to serve both the global and the local needs of learners of English. Such appropriate pedagogies are conceived as a 'market-place' (Holliday 1994: 7 in Kramsch and Sullivan 1996: 200), which should be 'socially sensitive' (McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008) and 'culturally responsive' (Porto 2009). This suggests that teaching and learning English should go beyond the cultural context framed by the teaching texts and consider both local cultural contexts and international variation.

2.2.2 Perspectives on English language teaching and learning

English language teaching and learning takes place predominantly in the classroom since it is difficult to experience learning in 'a natural immersion environment' (Lamy and Hampel 2007: 19). This gives rise to various classroom-centred learning theories that initially posit knowledge transmission and language acquisition as primary to language teaching, for example, behaviourist learning theory, developmental learning theory, and cognitive learning theory (Hoadley and Kilner 2005: 31). More recent approaches emphasise the socio-cultural and symbolic dimensions of learning and language learning has broadened

into language socialisation (Lam and Kramsch 2002). With regard to foreign and second language acquisition (SLA), Lamy and Hampel (2007) point out that two main theoretical perspectives have been influential: the cognitive perspective that underpins computational models of language learning and the socio-cultural perspective that underpins the constructivist paradigm.

A cognitive perspective focuses on the human being's inner mechanism for language acquisition, represented by the input-output-interaction hypotheses (Krashen 1981; Swain 1985, in Lamy and Hampel 2007: 20-1). The notion of interlanguage is an important concept in understanding how the second language (L2) learner creates an emergent linguistic system in seeking to approximate to L2 proficiency while still influenced by his or her first language (L1) in various ways (Gass and Selinker 1994; Byram 1997). This view of learning as an individual process best encouraged by explicit teaching largely separated from social engagement has subsequently been widely challenged (Hodgkinson-Williams, Slay and Siebörger 2008).

A socio-cultural perspective, on the other hand, attempts to understand and interpret 'how the behaviour, attitudes and motivation of individuals interact with cultural meanings and social interests in particular learning situations' (Palfreyman 2003: 13), i.e. it explains learning as 'a [process and] result of appropriation of social practices' (Hoadley and Kilner 2005: 31). Within a socio-cultural framework, SLA supports the practice of learning in groups (Long and Porter 1985, in Kramsch and Sullivan 1996: 202), although the appropriateness of group work should also be considered from a cultural perspective (Holliday 1994: 54, in Kramsch and Sullivan 1996: 203). This approach also requires the tutor to be a participant in the learning process, facilitating interaction among learners and

guiding them through their learning (Lamy and Hampel 2007: 61), whether individual or collective.

These views of learning suggest that language learning and teaching is fundamentally a complex process of both individual commitment and social practice, which necessitates a complementary, rather than contested, understanding of all these perspectives (Kern 2000). One way of combining both individual cognitive learning and collective social practices is to establish 'learning communities' (Rivera-Mills 2010), based on the concept of 'communities of practice' (Wenger 2006; see also Lamy and Hampel 2007). Hoadley and Kilner (2005) argue that, irrespective of learning theory, communities can provide opportunities for learning' because learning is 'a natural by-product of communities'. Wenger (2006) sees communities of practice as groups of people with a shared concern or a passion to do something and to improve their practice through regular interaction. This definition helps to re-conceptualise how, especially at higher levels, students can engage in social participation as a process of learning and knowing. As Hodgkinson-Williams et al. (2008: 435) explain, learning does not happen in a vacuum, but in a social environment rich with both historical and contemporary assets, providing students 'with [the] resource of other students, each with their own knowledge, experience and expertise, with whom to share ideas, negotiate meaning and work towards shared understandings'.

Therefore, within HEIs, a learning community, or knowledge-building community (Hoadley and Kilner 2005), can be understood as a group of students 'who study together in an intense, integrated, thematic course that meets for large blocks of time' (Eby et al. 2006, in Rivera-Mills 2010: 336). One of the purposes of establishing learning communities is for teachers to organise collaborative learning and for institutions to build up knowledge reservoir (Hoadley and Kilner *ibid.*). Learning communities also aim to

overcome the isolation of the faculty members from one another and their students by building a sense of group identity and cohesion (Rivera-Mills 2010).

One particularly appropriate application of the learning community is for intercultural learning (Eisenclas and Trevaskes 2007; Rivera-Mills 2010). For example, in Eisenclas and Trevaskes' (2007) review of four programmes undertaken as part of the internationalisation policy of their institution, they found that building communities of practice based on intergroup interaction between local (Australian) and international students was both possible and practical, and enhanced students' intercultural communication skills and affective development. Rivera-Mills (2010: 352) likewise reported on an institution-wide Spanish language learning community and found that 'the interaction with the Latino community in and out of class made for an enriching and transforming cultural experience'. The potential for learning community development with the advent of Internet technologies has enabled traditional notions of community to transcend geographical limitations, by making possible the establishment of online learning communities, or groups, in particular by means of computer-mediated communication for the development of learners' linguistic skills, cultural understanding and critical awareness (Lamy and Hampel 2007: 28). This is discussed in Section 2.4.1.4.

In sum, I adopt the position that both cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives are useful in addressing the challenges associated with teaching EIL, and suggest that the notion of an intercultural learning community can make a pertinent contribution to thinking about foreign language education (FLE). In the following section, I discuss why an intercultural approach is desirable for FLE in an international context and what this entails.

2.3 Towards an intercultural approach to FLE

Globalisation has led to greater demand for foreign language skills, and a greater awareness of the need for enhanced understanding of different cultures when learning to communicate. Although culture as a concept has attracted numerous definitions and interpretations, there is no consensus on what culture is, owing to the ‘complexity and variation in our understanding of the culture concept’ (Levy 2007: 104). While it is not my intention to define what culture and (intercultural) communication is, I believe that a brief review of the varied interpretations of the concept will help us to understand the pedagogic approaches to which it is central.

2.3.1 Culture and intercultural communication

Although definitions of culture vary from discipline to discipline, it can be broadly viewed from four major perspectives, i.e. cognitive, symbolic, socio-cultural and critical/ideological.

A cognitive perspective sees culture as structured knowledge that is highly abstracted from concrete products and practices (Roberts, Byram, Jordan and Street 2001). Such highly abstract knowledge often equates to a national or ethnically defined representation and interpretation of cultures (Palfreyman 2003), for example, Chinese culture and British culture. A symbolic view takes culture as ‘a system of *public* meanings’ which is ‘acted out publicly among those who could be said to have the same culture’ (Roberts et al. 2001: 51, italics original). These cultural meanings are often interpreted as ‘values and customary ways of behaving in different kinds of community’ (Palfreyman 2003: 1).

While the above two perspectives are embedded in an essentialist assumption that presents 'a relatively unproblematic, static and ahistorical image of "culture"' (Roberts et al. 2001: 52-3; also Piller 2007), a socio-cultural perspective and a critical perspective both take a non-essentialist view that interprets culture as a dynamic process of emergence, construction and change. The socio-cultural view regards culture as human practice in socio-cultural contexts as opposed to the individual acting in isolation (Palfreyman 2003: 2). In this regard, Jin and Cortazzi (1998: 98) define culture as 'socially transmitted patterns of behaviour and interaction'. Critical pedagogy, however, views the teaching of culture as an aspect of the exercise of power and argues above all for the need to bring about social change (Roberts et al. 2001: 53).

The above perspectives differ in understanding culture variously as 'being' or 'doing', as Roberts et al. (2001: 54-5) point out. It appears equally acceptable for culture to be seen on the one hand as 'an abstract feature of a large community' and on the other, as being realised 'in the conduct of individual people' (Palfreyman 2003: 8). Such a distinction underpins the two paradigms distinguished by Holliday (1999), known as 'large culture' and 'small culture' paradigms. According to Holliday (1999: 237-8), the 'large culture' paradigm refers to the prescribed ethnic, national and international entities whereas the 'small culture' paradigm attaches 'culture' to small social groupings or activities wherever there is cohesive behaviour. The former often results in reductionist over-generalisation and otherisation of 'foreign' educators, students and societies. The latter, by contrast, avoids culturist stereotyping and insists on 'a dynamic, ongoing group process which operates in changing circumstances to enable group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within those circumstances' (ibid.: 248). Small cultures also differ from sub-cultures because the latter define themselves as 'sub-sets of large cultures' (ibid.: 239).

Atkinson (1999: 641-648), while avoiding defining the concept of culture, has proposed six principles of culture in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), namely:

- All humans are individuals;
- Individuality is also cultural;
- Social group membership and identity are multiple, contradictory, and dynamic;
- Social group membership is consequential;
- Methods of studying cultural knowledge and behaviour are unlikely to fit a positivist paradigm;
- Language (learning and teaching) and culture are mutually implicated, but culture is multiple and complex.

The varied conceptualisations of culture are also associated with another important concept which perceives cultural awareness as fundamental to effective communication and has been variously termed ‘cross-cultural communication’, ‘intercultural communication’, ‘transcultural communication’, and ‘interdiscourse communication’ (see Wiseman and Koester 1993; Samovar, Porter and Stefani 1998; Scollon and Scollon 2001a, b; Jandt 2004; Piller 2007). A consensus seems to have been reached that cross-cultural communication involves the comparative study of multiple cultures (often at the national level) whereas intercultural communication refers to face-to-face (or direct) ‘interactions among people of diverse cultures’ (Jandt 2004: 39), although some scholars choose not to differentiate (see Rubin 1989 and Kim 1993 in Wiseman and Koester 1993) between them. Scollon and Scollon (2001a), while agreeing with this distinction, find it problematic to define culture in the subject of ‘intercultural communication’ because groups of people tend to seek

commonality, and often ignore differences among members. Taking an interactional sociolinguistic perspective, they (ibid.: 138) explain that:

‘discourse is communication between or among individuals. Cultures, however, are large, superordinate categories; they are not individuals. Cultures are a different level of logical analysis from the individual members of cultures. Cultures do not talk to each other; individuals do. In that sense, all communication is interpersonal communication and can never be intercultural communication.’

Scollon and Scollon’s argument offers a parallel to Holliday’s small-large culture paradigms because they both represent non-essentialist attempts to understand ‘culture’ and ‘intercultural communication’. Hence Scollon and Scollon (2001a, b) propose using a discourse approach to intercultural communication, which asserts that ‘all communication is to some extent interdiscourse communication’ (2001a: 6). They further insist that the focus of communication should be shifted away from comparison between ‘cultures’ and ‘individuals’ to the co-construction process of communication (2001b). Following this line of thought, Piller (2007: 208) adopts the capitalised ‘Intercultural Communication’ as a hierarchical term to cover three distinct modes of communication, i.e. ‘cross-cultural communication’, ‘intercultural communication’ and ‘interdiscourse communication’. The first two types are based in essentialist assumptions of people belonging to or having a culture, or of ‘culture A’ in contact with ‘culture B’. By contrast, the third insists that any *a priori* notion of group membership be set aside (Scollon and Scollon 2001a) and that it is linguistic and social practices that formulate culture and identity (Burr 2003 in Piller 2007).

In this regard, the concepts of culture and intercultural communication need to entail both collective cultural manifestations and individual cultural presentations. Hence, both views, especially the non-essentialist view of understanding culture and intercultural communication (Holliday's 1999; Scollon and Scollon's 2001a, b; Piller 2007), have informed the theoretical framework of my thesis which also sees 'mono-cultural' contexts as 'intercultural' or 'interpersonal'. The following section will examine the approaches and methods in language teaching and learning which these underpin.

2.3.2 Approaches to teaching and learning culture and intercultural communication

Recognition of the importance of understanding cultural meanings has generated enthusiasm for the study of the relationship between language and culture, and for making efforts to integrate the linguistic and cultural aspects of language teaching through a range of approaches, strategies and techniques (e.g. Robinson 1985; Byram 1989, 1997; Kramsch 1993, 1998; Byram, Nichols and Stevens 2001; Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey 2002; Risager 2006, 2007). It is now widely agreed that the ability to form grammatically correct utterances in the target language does not amount to the successful communication of intended meaning; a layer of cultural meanings is also conveyed in syntactic-grammatical structures and this has to be understood or shared by the parties concerned (Byram 1989, 1997; Kramsch 1993, 1998; Corbett 2003). However, a review shows that it has not been straightforward for the cultural dimension to find its proper place in language teaching and learning. For a long time, the role of culture had been neglected or marginalised in language classes before it received attention in the 1980s (Byram 1997; O'Dowd 2006).

Traditionally, in courses that treated culture as background studies, the target culture was viewed in a static and generalized way (Liddicoat 2003, 2004), as if it were an

accumulation of fixed cognitive, psychological and behavioural knowledge to be simply transmitted to learners (see Byram 1997; O'Dowd 2006). In courses that include both the home culture and the target culture, a cross-cultural contrastive approach is often adopted, comparing similarities and differences displayed through products, practices and perspectives between distinct cultural groups (Piller 2007). Viewing national cultures as embodying unchanging meanings, values and behaviours can lead to stereotyping (Jordan 2002). Moreover, Block (2007: 117) argues critically that this comparison-contrast approach merely offers learners 'cross-cultural knowledge in the form of awareness', i.e. learning about cultural differences and knowledge of intercultural communication, but fails to equip them with the critical reflectiveness that they are likely to need in real-life encounters, i.e. learning through intercultural communication. Even in a communicative approach which supports authentic and meaningful tasks that seek to merge language and culture learning (Müller-Hartmann 2000), potential cultural exploration via interaction with texts gave way to information-gap tasks (Corbett 2003). These approaches to teaching culture and intercultural communication as a subject fall into the 'large culture paradigm'. In such a paradigm, culture learning tends to be 'other-' or 'foreign-' directed and teachers and students focus teaching and learning on one pre-defined 'target' ethnic, national or international culture (Piller 2007), within which they must operate, inducing learners to do no more than '[read] up knowledge of a country's culture' (Risager 1994: 11).

Recent conceptualisations of culture as 'a shifting and constantly changing construct have called for new approaches in culture teaching' (Dlaska 2000: 248), which often involve experiential learning and direct contact with the target culture community, such as ethnography and study abroad. These approaches were developed with an intention to deal with '[the] Achilles' heel of foreign language teaching' namely 'the distance to the foreign culture' (Risager *ibid.*) and the lack of a learning environment that stimulates 'meaningful

interaction between information presented and the learning goals of the students' (Bélisle 2008: 3). In this regard, Roberts et al. (2001: 3-4) propose an ethnographic approach to language learning through 'observing and understanding daily life in an environment where the language in question is spoken by native (and other) speakers'. A study abroad, or residence abroad (Alred and Byram 2002), approach uses similar methods. However, methodologically, the mere exposure of learners to learning the language in a target language environment does not automatically produce heightened cultural awareness (Dlaska 2000). Without good training in observation, analysis and writing (Roberts et al. *ibid.*), learners are more likely to have a sort of travellers' or sojourners' view of a target culture (Byram 1997) which remains superficial. In fact, in at least one major study, national stereotypes held by university students were found to be reinforced, rather than diminished, by a period of residence abroad (Coleman 1998: 59).

More recent approaches to intercultural learning recognize the multiplicity of cultures in any linguistic area, the infrequency with which individuals display 'national' collective characteristics (Goodfellow and Hewling 2005; Macfadyen 2005), and the relativity of all cultures which emerges from comparisons and contrasts across cultures, including the learners' own (Piller 2007). This non-essentialist perspective presents a fresh rationale for considering culture as a process of 'searching for, demarcating and observing the interaction between several cultures within a target scenario' (Holliday 1999: 259-60), which embodies assertion, negotiation, construction, reflection, and the dynamics of interaction between individuals (Jordan 2002). More importance has been attached to the process of interpersonal communication and the individual's capacity for identity formation, self-expression and reformulation (Block 2007). In viewing culture as communication and discourse, Holliday (1999), Scollon and Scollon (2001a, b) and Piller (2007) try to deconstruct collective culture into individual forms of expression and to

further distance reified cultural entities from individual identities. This suggests that, although a content approach may lead to gains in cultural knowledge and in the awareness of cultures in communication, a shift must be made from 'reified and inescapable notions of cultural difference to a focus on discourses where culture is actually made relevant and used as a communicative resource' (Piller 2007). Such a small culture perspective, or discourse approach, tends to require one to achieve an ability to understand cultures as socially constructed in the discourse of communication and to mediate between them. In summary, the shift from seeing cultural learning as the gaining of content knowledge to viewing it first as a process of communication between different cultures, and then as the negotiated dynamics of linguistic and social practices and identity formation has led to a succession of changes in the goals of FLE. However, this is not to deny the merits of any of these approaches, each of which contributes to the richness of pedagogical understanding and the variety of practices available for enhancing cultural teaching and learning. The following section will nonetheless focus on identifying an intercultural approach which seeks to harness the merits of the above approaches to the purpose of developing an intercultural speaker within a framework that has come to be known as Intercultural Communicative Competence.

2.3.3 Towards an intercultural approach

An intercultural approach, according to Corbett (2003: 30), 'assimilates some of the features of earlier approaches to culture in the communicative curriculum' by making it 'an integral part of the curriculum', in which linguistic development and intercultural understanding are equally important. It also takes both target and home culture into careful consideration, with respect to both 'cautious description and critical evaluation' (ibid. 19). The aim of an intercultural approach is to develop learners' intercultural communicative competence (ICC), as against the conventional communicative competence (CC), and

develop learners as ‘intercultural speakers’, rather than launching them on an illusory quest to transform themselves into ‘native speakers’ (Byram 1997).

2.3.3.1 The limitations of communicative competence

The shift from a static view of culture to a dynamic perspective has transformed the goals of FLE. While the earlier cognitive approach stresses language proficiency, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach promotes the notion of communicative competence developed by Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), which not only includes linguistic competence, but also sociolinguistic or socio-cultural, discourse and strategic competence (see Byram 1997; Corbett 2003; O’Dowd 2006; Liu 2007a). In communicative competence, Hymes (1972) particularly highlights the relationship between linguistic and socio-cultural competence, identifying the latter as seeking to achieve the ‘appropriateness’ of an utterance in a given context, governed by native-speaker norms (Liu 2007a).

The communicative approach has been under challenge from a number of directions since the 1990s, not least from the thinking that has taken place around the cultural dimension of language learning (Byram 1997; Kramsch 1998). What makes it problematic is the nebulous and relatively unattainable goal it sets for second language learners of seeking to attain ‘native speaker’ linguistic competence while conforming to target cultural norms and values (Liu 2007a). Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1998) question the applicability of native speaker norms for language learners and worry about the abandoning of their own cultural identities as a result of imitating the native speaker’s conventions and norms in communication. As Kramsch (1998: 359) asks, ‘Why should [students] disregard their unique multilingual perspective on the foreign language and its literature and language to emulate an idealized monolingual native speaker?’ Instead, she (ibid.) endorses the

privilege of being an intercultural speaker who has the advantage of adopting multiple perspectives in mediating between cultural identities. Alptekin (2002: 57), referring to English as an international language, comments that communicative competence is 'utopian, unrealistic and constraining' because socio-cultural competence equates to no more than acquiring socio-cultural background knowledge of the target language community. Holliday (2005) sees the notion of the 'native speaker' ideal as an absurd over-simplification and, as an alternative, advocates recognising 'cultural continuity', i.e. 'an appreciation of how cultural realities and practices connect and mingle to allow collaborative inclusivity' (Holliday 2005: 157).

Such a negation of the native-speaker orientation also undermines the pedagogic relevance of interlanguage theory, which seems restrictive in the sense that it does not take the broad learning context into account (Liddicoat 2004). It will be understood that since social and cultural contexts vary from place to place it is improper and impossible for learners to follow only one routine of linguistic-cultural practice. In this regard, Liddicoat (2004) proposes that interlanguage be replaced by the notion of interculture. This takes up a holistic view of the dynamics of interaction and mediation, in the process of communication between people of different cultural identities, within a situated context.

2.3.3.2 Models of intercultural (communicative) competence

As discussed above, the shift of focus from 'interlanguage' to 'interculture' as a significant arena for language learners implies a reconceptualisation of the language learning endeavour (Roberts et al. 2001). To become intercultural speakers, learners need to develop abilities that extend beyond an orientation to native speaker-like status (Holliday 2005). In recent years, scholars and researchers from diverse backgrounds have enthusiastically theorised such concepts as intercultural ability, cross-cultural competence,

transcultural competence, intercultural communication competence, intercultural (communicative) competence, etc. In this thesis, I adopt Byram (1997) and others' (Byram et al. 2001) intercultural communicative competence model with a non-essentialist perspective, not only for the sake of consistency within the field of applied linguistics and FLE, but also because Byram's ICC model (Figure 2.1) has been widely accepted in language programmes and policy making (Block 2007; Corbett 2003). ICC is defined as the ability to interact effectively in a target language with members of cultures that are different to one's own (Byram 1997; O'Dowd 2006). It involves linguistic, socio-linguistic, discourse and intercultural competences.

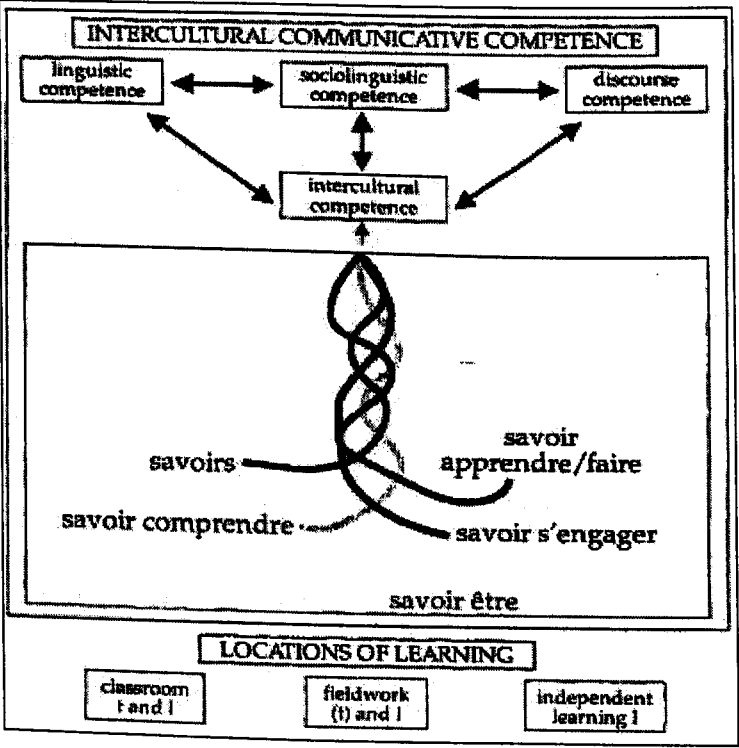


Figure 2.1 Model of ICC (Byram 1997)

The ICC model shifts away from a concentration on the target language community (i.e. socio-cultural competence) to more diversified contexts where intercultural communication takes place. Byram (ibid.) further distinguishes intercultural competence (IC) from ICC in that the former refers to the ability to communicate with members of other cultures in one's own language while the latter implies the same ability but using a foreign language

(see also O'Dowd 2006). This is a very useful distinction in the context of FLE, although some scholars (see Sercu 2010) tend to equate IC with ICC. Hence, ICC comprises an IC dimension in addition to the conventional CC dimensions in FLE.

Byram (1997: 50-3) specifies the IC elements in terms of five '*savoirs*', i.e. knowledge, attitudes, two sets of skills and critical cultural awareness. He argues that learners need knowledge of both their own and their interlocutor's culture, and of the general process of societal and individual interactions. Moreover, he believes that an attitude of 'curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own' (ibid.: 58) is also essential in communication. In addition, he proposes that learners need the skills of interpreting and relating, and the skills of discovery and interaction to handle various cognitive and affective tasks associated with acquiring intercultural competence. Ultimately, learners should be able to develop a critical awareness of perspectives, practices and products in their own and other cultures. Corbett (2010: 2) agrees with Byram's vision and summarises these elements as:

- knowing the self and the other
- knowing how to relate and interpret meanings
- knowing how to discover cultural information
- knowing how to relativise oneself and value others' attitudes and beliefs
- developing critical awareness

However, there are three points that should be made clear with regard to Byram's contribution. Firstly, his perception of culture largely remains focused on national groups, which lays it open to the criticism that it embodies an essentialist view of cultural phenomena, as Block (2007:119) notes. However, it could be argued that in the teaching of

a foreign language, such a national boundary perception is unavoidable and national stereotypes, like cross-cultural comparisons, can be used with learners as a way to help them start to understand the issues involved in ICC. Pedagogically, discussing stereotypes in class could eventually lead learners to more open interpretations. Secondly, Byram (1997) recognizes that there is a challenge to his top-down list of IC objectives under each of the '*savoirs*' (see Byram 1997), which, although they have been acknowledged by a cohort of language educationalists and experts (e.g. Corbett 2003; 2010; O'Dowd 2006), are yet to be supported by empirical data (Feng, personal communication, 16/03/2008). Thirdly, how these objectives can be operationalised for formal teaching is not clearly specified, since the model can be used in various settings, not only in the classroom but also in fieldwork and independent learning situations.

In North America, Deardorff (2004) collected data from scholars in intercultural studies who were asked about their understandings of IC and its associated methods of assessment. The resulting consensus was developed into two sets of IC models: the Pyramid Model and the Process Model of Intercultural Competence, which present the same constructs but with different foci. In the former, attitudes (e.g. respect, openness, and curiosity and discovery), knowledge and comprehension (e.g. cultural self-awareness, deep understanding and knowledge of culture, culture-specific information and sociolinguistic awareness) and skills (e.g. listening, observing, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating and relating) form the base of the pyramid, topped by two sets of outcomes: internal and external. The internal outcome examines personal achievements such as adaptability, flexibility, empathy and reduced ethnocentrism; the external outcome evaluates the effectiveness and appropriateness of behaviours and communication. There is an explicit move from the individual level to the interpersonal/interactive level. In contrast, the Process Model emphasizes the dynamics between the components. It argues that personal

attitudes should be the starting point for the development of IC knowledge and skills in order to achieve the internal and external outcomes.

A comparison with Byram’s (1997) model shows that the three have a lot in common in terms of components. All three include the cognitive, affective and skills domains for IC development and intended outcomes or objectives, most of which are identical. This suggests that although Byram’s list of elements and objectives expresses his hypotheses concerning what should be taught and assessed as evidence of intercultural development, his proposed objectives fit a bottom-up approach. On the other hand, although Deardorff (2004) outlines a process orientation within the components of the model, there remains no indication of a pedagogical process, largely because this model was not created for the particular context of language education.

Liddicoat (2003) presents a process model of Intercultural Learning and Teaching (ILT), which involves opportunities to reflect on one’s own culture, to experiment with the new culture and to decide how one wishes to respond to cultural differences. The model (Figure 2.2) is presented in the form of awareness-raising, skills development, production and feedback.

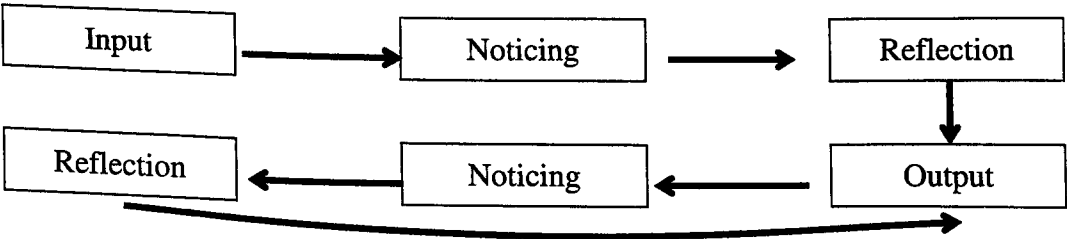


Figure 2.2 A pathway for developing intercultural competence (Liddicoat 2003)

For Liddicoat, the awareness-raising stage is where learners are introduced to new input about language and culture, and have an opportunity to notice differences between the new

input and their own culture, with the teacher's support. Skills development involves communicative tasks which practise elements of the new knowledge and help to experiment or experience learning in a new speech situation. In production, students integrate their experience and knowledge in actual language use. The feedback stage involves reflecting on the experience of acting like a native speaker in the production phase and encourages students to work towards discovering a 'third place' (Kramsch 1993). Liddicoat (ibid.) emphasises that 'the process of developing intercultural competence is cyclical' because learners' interaction with the new input and its subsequent production is never straightforward, often resulting in progressive reflections and outputs (Figure 2.2).

Compared with the above models, this ILT model focuses more on the skills dimension of IC development than the cognitive and affective components. It is unclear what the specification of objectives is for teaching and assessment. Therefore, it can be argued that these models complement each other and should be integrated within a context to provide a complete version of ICC for teaching and learning.

2.3.3.3 The intercultural speaker and autonomous learner

The cultivation of ICC, then, requires learners to go beyond the native-speaker target (Holliday 2005). In recent years, language learning has become increasingly defined in cultural terms and the educational goal for language learners has been described as developing 'cultural mediators', 'border-crossers', 'negotiators of meaning', 'intercultural speakers' (ibid.: 3) and such like. 'Intercultural speaker' is the widely used term and is often related to 'intercultural mediator' (Alred and Byram 2002) and 'intercultural being' (Phipps and Gonzales 2004), the last two of which 'seek to push language [teaching] beyond a focus on linguistic code and text to a focus on the learner, the context, and the social nature of human experience' (Liddicoat ibid.). In the context of the current

discussion of language education the concept of 'intercultural speaker' represents a more appropriate aspiration than the 'native speaker' notion.

Rather than taking a native speaker role, language learners need to develop an 'intercultural speaker' target (Byram 1997, 2008; Kramsch 1998; Byram et al. 2001; Byram et al. 2002; Corbett 2003; O'Dowd 2006; Thorne 2006), i.e. to become a person with 'the ability to interact effectively with people from cultures [...] different from our own' (Guilherme 2000: 297) and the ability to discover and relate to new people from other contexts for which they have not been prepared directly (Byram 1997). The intercultural speaker who can interact effectively should respond to different cultures appropriately, and be able to mediate between different cultures, explore and relate to new people and events in less familiar contexts (Byram 1997; Kramsch 1998). That is to say, the intercultural speaker should have the ability to 'go across' and 'go beyond' different cultures (Gao 2002). The word 'culture' in this sense, can be interpreted at both the 'large culture' level and the 'small culture' level, because the intercultural speaker needs to transit between the two levels in the process of interaction with others (Holliday 1999).

The ideal intercultural speaker should also be an autonomous learner, because, in line with the five '*savoirs*' in IC (Figure 2.1) an intercultural speaker is able to interact with and mediate between people of different cultural groups for the purpose of intercultural exploration, comparison, mediation, and collaboration through language and social practices (Byram 1997; Kramsch 1998; Corbett 2003, 2010). An autonomous learner is someone who has 'a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a social, responsible person' (Dam et al. 1990: 102, in Smith 2008). This suggests that autonomy is not only individual, but also collective or social (Holliday 2003, 2005). An intercultural speaker undertaking autonomous learning involves developing both

‘strategies to learn with or from their peers’ (Dlaska 2000: 258) and independent learning and critical thinking (Little 2007). To encourage autonomy in both individual and collective learning, Little (2007: 23-4) subscribes to two principles: learner reflection and learner involvement. The former requires ‘reflective intervention’ as a key feature in the teaching-learning process, covering both incidental reflection and explicitly detached reflection. The latter requires that the teacher help learners attend to their own learning process, share responsibilities for setting the learning agenda, manage classroom interaction, select learning materials and activities, and evaluate learning outcomes.

2.2.3.4 Teaching and assessment concerns

The development of ICC within an intercultural approach also has implications for the use of textbook materials which are often regarded as an important tool in language teaching and assessment. Chapelle (2010: 45) suggests that the role of the textbook depends on teachers and students’ understanding of and interest in the materials and their ability to interact with the materials. While the communicative approach demands ‘authentic’ materials from the target culture as input, such practice has been criticised as an illusion because the use of ‘genuine texts’ does not necessarily guarantee the production of ‘authentic discourse’ (Widdowson 1990/2001; Feng and Byram 2002) in a foreign language class, since authenticity ‘does not depend on the source from which the language as an object is drawn but on the learners’ engagement with it’ (Widdowson *ibid.*: 44-5).

Taking a critical review of the discussions on genuine texts, authenticity and cultural authenticity made by Widdowson (1979, 1990, 1998 in Feng and Byram 2002) and others (e.g. Kramsch 1993), Feng and Byram (2002) agree that the CLT approach does not satisfy the ‘means/ends equation’ in the language classroom. Furthermore the notion of authenticity conforms to a native-speaker model and therefore it is inappropriate for

language teachers and learners to ‘constantly refer to the contextually appropriate ways native speakers actually put the target language in use’ (Feng and Byram 2002: 59). Based on Byram’s (1997) ICC model, Feng and Byram (ibid.: 63) propose a notion of ‘intercultural authenticity’, involving what they call the micro-social (individual) and macro-social (collective) levels, as follows:

‘the presence of “realist” representations of cultures, including the target culture and learners’ own, at micro-social and macro-social levels and the opportunity for learners to develop their own understanding of the intentions of text producers and the relationship between texts thus creating a mediated interpretation of texts embracing the intentions of the text producers and the perceptions of learners’.

Such a multi-dimensional representation suggests that language materials should avoid oversimplification and over-generalisation, and encourage language learners to engage in a dialogue, interacting, mediating with and reflecting on such materials from different perspectives (Cortazzi and Jin 1999; MacDonald, Badger and Dasli 2006). Therefore, this notion of intercultural authenticity moves away from essentialist views of culture, and supports the more open (‘non-essentialist’ or ‘interpretive’) approach described by Holliday (1999). It also aligns with Piller’s (2007) category of ‘interdiscourse communication’ and with the different levels of Scollon and Scollon’s (2001a, b) conceptual framework of Intercultural Communication from the textual, interpersonal and intercultural perspectives.

Through an analysis of a *College English* course book popularly used in China, Feng and Byram (ibid.) further elaborate the criteria for intercultural authenticity by addressing four

key issues in writing and using textbooks: intercultural representations, mediation of intention and interpretation, balance of diachrony and synchrony and image representations, and principles of contrivance. With regard to these issues, Feng and Byram (*ibid.*: 63-7) believe that textbooks should contain ‘two or even more texts on the same issue by people from different cultural backgrounds’, to raise intercultural awareness not only of diverse products and practices, but also different perspectives. Corbett (2010: 2) also believes that the learners’ own cultures are neglected as an extensive resource for language classes.

Although Feng and Byram’s notion of intercultural authenticity is devised for writing and analysing textual material, it can be argued that it is equally applicable to selecting and using language materials from other media, such as the Internet, whether textual, verbal or audio-visual. More importantly, perhaps, attention should be paid to learners’ ‘normal language behaviour [...] in pursuit of a communicative outcome’ (Widdowson 1990/2001: 46) in the classroom. This is because the introduction of textbook materials and multiple representations merely provides information and will not necessarily suffice to create cultural awareness and experience (Dlaska 2000: 253; also Block 2007). Neuner and Hunfeld (1993, in Dlaska 2000) suggest that literary texts are ideal materials for intercultural learning because of their openness to interpretation, inviting learners to use their own experiences and imagination in (co-)constructing the fictional world in their minds. Dlaska (2000: 256) proposes that learners undertake additional research activities to fill gaps between topics in existing textbooks and the real world, while Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 210) suggest that learners be trained to view their sources critically and to practise independent strategies such as rewriting from different perspectives for culture learning.

However, the issue of intercultural authenticity in teaching challenges the existing assessment methods which have been long rooted in quantity-based language proficiency

examinations that test learners' outputs (Widdowson 1990/2001). The personalised interpretations and multi-dimensional representations of cultural images in the discourse of learning make standardised tests and their statistical treatments inappropriate for assessing the outcome of becoming and being an intercultural speaker not only cognitively, but also affectively and behaviourally (Byram 1997; Corbett 2003, 2010), often requiring an evaluation of the process of learning and learners' conceptions of such learning effects (Widdowson *ibid.*).

In view of the complexity involved in assessing the components of ICC, Byram (1997, 2000) and Jacobson, Sleicher and Maureen (1999) suggest that a portfolio approach could be an attractive option in handling the unquantifiable evaluation items, such as affectivity and behaviour, which comprise ICC outcomes. According to MacIsaac and Jackson (1994: 64 in Jacobson et al. 1999: 469) a portfolio is 'a purposeful collection of a learners' work assembled over time that documents one's efforts, progress, and achievements'. Such an approach can be a combination of both process-focused (e.g. working portfolio) and product-oriented (e.g. showcase portfolio) undertaking. The European Language Portfolio (Little 2005) and the Europe-wide INCA project are cases in point. Based on Jacobson et al. (1999), Lescher (1995, in Hashem 1995) and Lee (1997), Wang (2010: 178-9) synthesises the advantages of a portfolio approach below:

- Authentic collection of work over time, tracking students' progress and achievement in real-life activities;
- Multi-dimensional collection of cognitive, affective, behavioural, and contextual domains;
- Reciprocal relationship between instruction and assessment, the former being facilitative and responsive to the latter and vice versa;

- Joint responsibilities with students' active involvement, informing both teachers and students of the evaluation of progress and encouraging them to reflect on the process of intercultural teaching and learning.

While such a portfolio approach can bring benefits that facilitate learners' ICC development and learner autonomy (see Little 2005) and foster collaborative learning such as peer and joint assessment, there are also considerable constraints on its implementation. Pedagogically, as Byram (1997) recognises, the ICC objectives are still open to justification and identification, which offers no guarantee that portfolio assessment can be complete and full. Methodologically, a portfolio approach assumes that learners are sufficiently responsible and autonomous to track their own intercultural development, which in reality may not be the case (Wang 2010). Practically, in some societies certification of learners' achievements may be important (Byram 1997: 29) and there can be great difficulty in ensuring that evidence presented in a portfolio is standardised and of equal validity. It is also extremely time-consuming and labour-intensive for both teachers and learners to assess, which may not necessarily be accepted with enthusiasm (Wang 2010). Therefore, the portfolio approach needs to take the local social-institutional contexts into account and perhaps explore negotiated solutions, such as self-evaluation (Byram, personal communication, 10/07/2009).

To sum up, an intercultural approach is considered beneficial to cultivate intercultural speakers and develop ICC, despite constraints such as course material use and the challenges of assessment. In the next section, I address the issue of harnessing an intercultural approach for an Internet-mediated environment.

2.4 Using the Internet for English language education

The use of technology has long been associated with, and contributed to, language education, from the use of a piece of chalk to a mouse click. Technology outpaces educational practices in many ways (Corbett 2010), and educators always stress, a pedagogy-over-technology perspective, rightly articulating a serious concern over ‘increased infusions of technology into the classroom’ (Warschauer 2008: 53). Educators are urged to develop well-defined pedagogical frameworks for technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) to address the advantages and challenges in curricular objectives, lesson planning, hardware capability and software combinations, teacher training, and the like. Hence, ‘there will be no aspect of foreign language learning that will not be influenced by the technological revolution’ (Bush 1997: xiv).

The following sub-sections focus on the discussion of the Internet in language education and the potential that it offers to forge practices reflecting an intercultural approach.

2.4.1 The Internet, practices and approaches

2.4.1.1 A developmental view

The emergence of the Web and Internet has made a fundamental difference in what can be done with CALL (computer-assisted language learning). Network-based language teaching (NBLT) refers to language teaching that involves the use of networked computers either locally or globally (Warschauer 2000; Belz 2001), for ‘human-to-human communication’ (Kern and Warschauer 2000: 1), although CALL remains as an umbrella term (Chapelle 2000, 2005). With its shift from ‘interacting *with* computers’ (Lam and Kramsch 2002: 144, *italics original*) to the outstanding feature of ‘*communicating through* computers’ (Lamy and Hampel 2007: 7, *italics original*), increasing attention has been paid to computer-

mediated communication (CMC or CMCL) for language education (Warschauer 1997; Lamy and Hampel *ibid.*). CMC refers to language teaching that involves the use of networked computers either locally or globally (Belz 2001), for ‘human-to-human communication’ (Kern and Warschauer 2000: 1). The Internet offers a possibility of global communication via connected computers.

In this thesis, I adopt the term ‘Internet-mediated’ as a modifier to ‘intercultural language teaching and learning’, to include various ICC-oriented teaching and learning practices mediated by the Web, email, CMC, networking software, etc. When I use ‘mediation’, I refer to processes attending language activities both directly based on the Web and those which are indirectly related to the use of the network (e.g. downloading a video clip for classroom discussion, without interaction through the network). Thus Internet mediation goes beyond the conventional classroom setting, or self-access centres and computer rooms. Technologically, the Web gives language classes an access to learning materials that are not available to a face-to-face class. Internet synchronous communication tools (e.g. video-conferencing), enable distant classes to join in simultaneous discussion. Asynchronous communication tools (e.g. e-forum) allow distant partner classes to participate in a discussion at different times.

The practice of language learning and teaching with Internet technology can be seen through the three main perspectives that structure the field of SLA. Cognitively, it provides language input and analytical and inferential tasks. Sociocognitively, it allows learners to interact with other individuals engaged in a common activity and to learn the language of a shared social community (Atkinson 1997 in Lam and Kramersch 2002: 144). A sociocultural perspective moves a little further as it prioritises ‘social activity’ (Lam and Kramersch *ibid.*) or ‘social interaction’ (Lamy and Hampel 2007: 28), rather than language learning,

facilitates ‘access to existing discourse communities’ (Lamy and Hampel *ibid.*) and creates new ones. Lam and Kramsch (2002: 144) also point out a ‘symbolic/ritualistic’ (see Section 2.3.1) perspective of SLA, which sees a unity of language acquisition and socialisation. Socialisation is seen as ‘the negotiation of power and identity through language’ and ‘becomes an integral part of acquisition’ (Rampton 1995, in Lam and Kramsch 2002: 144).

In the case of SLA and Internet mediation, these perspectives have contributed ways of ‘enriching classroom activities, reorganising course structures, and providing learners with more autonomous as well as more learner-centred opportunities for learning’ (Korsvold and Rüschoff 1997: 7). The variation of perspectives implies a multiple understanding of language learning as the dynamics of social interaction and identity construction through participation in discourse practices mediated by Internet technologies (Lam and Kramsch 2002).

2.4.1.2 Internet tools, cultures-of-use and intercultural learning

A decade ago, intensive intercultural exposure and interaction was available only through experience abroad (Lafford and Lafford 1997), but the role of Internet technologies as input, output and communication spaces for intercultural learning and exchange is now widely recognized (Belz and Thorne 2006; Block 2007; Lamy and Hampel 2007). Briefly, Internet technologies include asynchronous communication tools (e.g. e-mail and e-forums), synchronous tools (e.g. videoconferencing and audiographic conferencing platforms, chat rooms and instant messengers) as well as information tools (browsers, search engines, and online dictionaries). More recently, the advent of Web 2.0 technologies (e.g. blogging, wikis, and networking software) has enabled social networking and community-building.

On the one hand, the utilisation of such tools can encourage students to use the target language for intercultural experience and learning. On the other hand, it is subject to the 'cultures-of-use' of the 'artefacts' (Thorne 2003: 38). Based on his study of three cases of Internet-mediated intercultural engagement, Thorne offers this construct to refer to the 'cultural embeddedness' (ibid.) of Internet tools, for example, the preference of students for chat over email for communicating with peers (ibid.: 55-6). He concludes that artefacts, including communication tools, are not neutral media and that there exist 'cultures-of-use' reflecting and shaping the way they are deployed. Similarly, in their special issue of the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Hargittai (2007) and other contributors find that the selection and use of search engines by users are influenced by non-technological dimensions such as social, political, economic and cultural aspects. These findings suggest that besides technological availability and pedagogical considerations, the implementation of Internet tools for intercultural language activities has to take the local educational context into account. Therefore, technically-focused suggestions for the adoption of Internet tools, such as Eastment's (2003: 91) enthusiastic recommendation of the 'remarkable Google' may call for scepticism.

As in the earlier discussion of classroom-based scenarios, an understanding of the notion of culture in Internet-mediated environment also has an essentialist/non-essentialist distinction. Based on his review of literature on culture learning, Levy (2007: 105) highlights five important qualities, or facets, of the concept of culture: 'culture as elemental; culture as relative; culture as group membership; culture as contested; and culture as individual (variable and multiple)'. Levy (2007) notes that, firstly, acculturated into a particular way of life since birth, we have to learn how our 'cultural orientation', or 'frame of reference' (ibid.: 106), is shaped and projected on to others. Secondly, when

interacting with other cultures, we should develop a more nuanced perspective through direct and small-scale engagement with others so as to offset the biases from generalisations. Thirdly, we live out our lives as members of groups and language plays a key role in negotiating membership. Fourthly, belonging to different groups, we often see that culture is contested at many levels, from nation-state clashes of cultures to personal experience of cultural shock. Lastly, as individuals, we are in a position to represent our own culture, and the exchange of cultural understandings is subject to individual interpretation.

While acknowledging that the five facets are artificially extracted from a more holistic concept of culture for the purpose of his discussion, Levy (ibid.) argues that each element builds on the previous one and such a categorisation is helpful as a basis for the examination of culture learning projects using new technologies, in which contexts the concept of culture is more complex. This synthesis distinguishes between collective and individual cultures, raising a sense of belonging to cultural groups while valuing individuals' experiences in representing multiple cultural identities. However, while Levy (2007) is right to identify the multiple levels of culture as contested, this synthesis seems to have overlooked another important aspect of culture, i.e. that it is negotiated between learners of different groups, especially in online environments, who may achieve successful intercultural communication.

2.4.1.3 Internet-mediated practices: pros and cons

Internet-mediated activities, like those in other language learning contexts, may be divided into 'non-interactive' (working with materials such as online newspapers), 'interactive' (working with other people, e.g. completing tasks using email or videoconferencing) and community-based (networking without necessarily fixed ties). The rapidly changing nature

of web pages allows teachers and learners to perceive the dynamic nature of cultures as they constantly form and reform, offering a 'source of frequently occurring, authentic, and contextualized language samples' (Wu, Franken and Witten 2009: 250) for language teaching and learning. The richness of textual, graphical and audio-visual materials can be seen as an up-to-date source able to supplant course books for enhancing learners' cultural awareness and knowledge (Carrier 1997). CMC enables active participation in interaction and reflection with access to an authentic audience, and the potential for the collaborative construction of knowledge in online interaction (Warschauer 1997; Benson 2001). More importantly, as O'Dowd and Eberbach (2004) stress, CMC-based activities contribute to the development of learners' ICC because communicating with members of the target culture may encourage learners to move from a 'fact-figure' notion of culture towards an ethnographic understanding of culture. Technically, CMC can provide a digital record of language transcripts that can be 'intensively studied after the fact' (Belz and Thorne 2006: xix). Establishing an online intercultural community not only provides a platform where learners can meet target language speakers, but also enriches intercultural experience with formal and informal learning (Corbett 2010).

While advocating the benefits that Internet technologies bring to the language class, many educators and teachers are aware of its challenges. For example, referring to Web-based activities, Osuna and Meskill (1998) and Dłaska (2000) acknowledge that although surfing the Web is more motivating for learners than using printed material, to process disordered data from the wealth of information on the Web can be daunting, particularly when dealing with resources in a foreign language (Dłaska 2000: 259). It may be also time-consuming to run searches which may not necessarily result in obtaining the desired 'authentic' materials; learners can easily lose track of time and of the original purpose for a search. In addition, Dłaska (ibid.) worries that 'students tend to consume information on the Web with less

attention to detail', or even, as Corbett (2010: 8) also warns, that they simply resort to 'cutting and pasting facts without processing them'. Many teachers are sceptical about and unwilling to adopt the Web because it lacks structure and there is no underlying language-learning syllabus for them to adhere to (Taylor and Gitsaki 2004). With regard to telecollaboration, or online intercultural exchange between learners from different cultural backgrounds, conflicts, failed communication (O'Dowd 2003; O'Dowd and Ritter 2006) and tensions (Dohn 2009) have been documented. Another challenge is that learners' learning styles play an important role in using Web 2.0 technologies because some students prefer an instruction-oriented approach while others do not (O'Dowd and Ware 2009; Olaniran 2009).

These challenges clearly demand consideration not only from technological and pedagogical points of view, but also from the socio-institutional and individual viewpoints of Internet-mediated intercultural activity. For example, researchers (Martins, Steil and Todesco 2004; Hampel and Hauck 2006) warn that simply providing Internet access in a language classroom will not automatically add educational value for students and teachers. Referring to the setup of self-access centres in many institutions for autonomous learning, Benson (2001: 9) observes that self-access work will not automatically lead to autonomy. In Benson's (ibid.: 140) conclusion, technology-based approaches cannot be regarded as 'more than a potential and a great deal depends on the ways in which technologies are made available to learners and the kinds of interaction that take place around them'. Therefore, to ensure that Internet technologies are teamed with language teaching and learning practices (Carrier 1997), effective approaches and models in context need to be identified, whether within classroom, outside classroom, or across sites.

2.4.1.4 Approaches to Internet-mediated intercultural activities

A diverse array of approaches can also be applied to Internet-mediated scenarios. However, the technological dimension creates a more complex situation, for cross-site collaboration blended with conventional classroom work challenges the practices in those classrooms (e.g. Corbett 2003; Belz and Thorne 2006; Debski 2006; Gu 2006; Liaw 2006; Müller-Hartmann 2006; O'Dowd 2006;). Therefore, a carefully articulated intercultural curriculum involving the design and implementation of activities is of vital importance in order to ensure that the use of technology is in line with pedagogical plans.

Resource-based approaches offer both teachers and learners the opportunity to develop the skills of discovery and selection of learning materials (Benson 2001: 113) for learning about cultural knowledge and practices, and for raising awareness of different perspectives. For instance, Osuna and Meskill (1998) reported using Internet resources as a means to gain a deeper sense of the culture of the Spanish-speaking world for their college students who were instructed to use the Web to complete five activities as an expansion of classroom-based cultural studies. Their conclusion was that the Web was 'a suitable tool to increase language and culture knowledge, as well as a means to increase motivation' (ibid.: 71). One potential pitfall, as Moore, Morales and Carel (1998), O'Dowd and Eberbach (2004), and O'Dowd (2006, 2007a, b) stress, is that simply searching and disseminating to learners information on cultural products and practices tends to revert to mere factual transmission, and an ill-defined syllabus for online intercultural instruction does not help to meet learners' learning outcomes. Therefore, a resource-based approach demands from teachers careful preparation, distribution of learning resources and provision of consultation and instruction (Benson 2001).

As mentioned before, the framework for developing and analysing tasks in communicative classrooms (Nunan 1989, 2004), is considered equally suitable for the Internet-mediated learning environment as long as the tasks serve an intercultural purpose (Corbett 2003, 2010). Müller-Hartmann (2007: 171-3) further recommends a combination of Nunan's (ibid.) model with Willis' (1996, in Müller-Hartmann 2007) sequencing model of a task cycle. The task-based approach has been considered to have great strengths, in particular for telecollaboration design, because collaborative learning necessarily engages tasks of various types (O'Dowd and Ware 2009), such as information exchange tasks, comparison-analysis tasks, and collaboration-production tasks (for a full account see O'Dowd and Ware 2009: 176-7). In a similar vein, Debski (2006) proposes a project-based approach for special curriculum design. Following Resnick (2002, in Debski 2006: 21) he argues that networked computers can support platforms for discussing (through email, bulletin boards and chat), building (through web and digital composition software, e.g. blogs) and sharing (through community). While there is a distinction between a project (longer-lasting) and a task (short-term), a project can often be broken up into tasks (Debski 2006: 10). Therefore, these two approaches are compatible and a project can also be prepared in the way that a task is (Debski ibid.).

Developing an online community for intercultural learning appears to be an alternative approach to language classroom activities (Corbett 2010). Hodgkinson-Williams et al. (2005: 433) observe that information and communication tools afford teachers and students an extension of their reach beyond individual, disciplinary and institutional boundaries. Lam and Kramsch's (2002) case study of an immigrant's participation in an established online community demonstrated that learners' language development and cultural identity construction are possible through communities of practice. Similarly, Gao's (2007) observation of the Blue Rain Café, an online English club created by a group of Chinese

fans of the English language, indicates that an online learning community is likely to create opportunities for community-based English language learning and use. However, such a practice is uncommon in formal language education situations because it lacks curriculum and pedagogical plans.

In short, the approaches employed, varied though they are, should all aim at achieving a rich learning environment that facilitates ICC development, including, in Lam and Kramsch's (2002: 156) words, 'The increase in self-confidence, the acquisition of a medium-appropriate register of English, the skilful representation of self, the ability to play multiple roles and adopt multiple voices, as well as the ability to command empathy and respect in a foreign language'.

2.4.2 Belz and Thorne's ICFLE: models and examples

2.4.2.1 Models

In a review of research into online language learning (Kern, Ware and Warschauer 2004), telecollaboration was identified as one of the salient themes (see also Hauck and Stickler 2006; Mangenot and Nissen 2006), as is shown by the numerous studies devoted to it (Müller-Hartmann 2000, 2006, 2007; Belz 2001, 2003; Belz and Müller-Hartmann 2003; O'Dowd 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007a, b; O'Dowd and Eberbach 2004; Belz and Thorne 2006). O'Dowd (2007a: 4), in particular, highlights the intercultural feature of telecollaboration and suggests using the term 'online intercultural exchange' to refer to 'the activity of engaging language learners in interaction and collaborative project work with partners from other cultures through the use of online communication tools'. More recently, the concept of telecollaboration has been upgraded to 'Telecollaboration 2.0' (Lomicka and Lord 2009; Guth and Helm 2010), including not only traditional telecollaboration, but also

social networking with Web 2.0 technologies. These studies have enriched Internet-mediated intercultural activities in the light of individual, sociocultural, institutional, and pedagogical dimensions of ICC-oriented programme design.

Belz and Thorne (2006) use the phrase Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education (ICFLE) to refer to models and methods for intercultural activities that make use of Internet technologies, mainly: telecollaboration, e-tandem learning, local learner-informant partnership and engagement in an established e-community. Figure 2.3 illustrates these authors' four major models of 'ICFLE', following Thorne's independent-instructional continuum (for a full account see Thorne 2006). Succinctly, telecollaboration is the model that offers international class-to-class exchanges within institutionalised settings, requiring intensive coordination from syllabus negotiation to technological preparation. The second model, e-tandem learning sets up the pairing of individuals with an interest in learning each other's language for mutual benefit through various online communication tools. The third model involves organizing partnerships via Internet connections between learners and local expert speakers of the target language as informants for consultation and communication. The fourth model requires students' engagement in established online communities for exploration and exchange. Across these four models, a shared feature is the inclusion of participants outside the classroom via Internet technologies, the goals being to achieve linguistic and pragmatic development, better understanding of, and reflection on, one's own and other cultures, and mediation of the processes of intercultural communication (Thorne 2006).

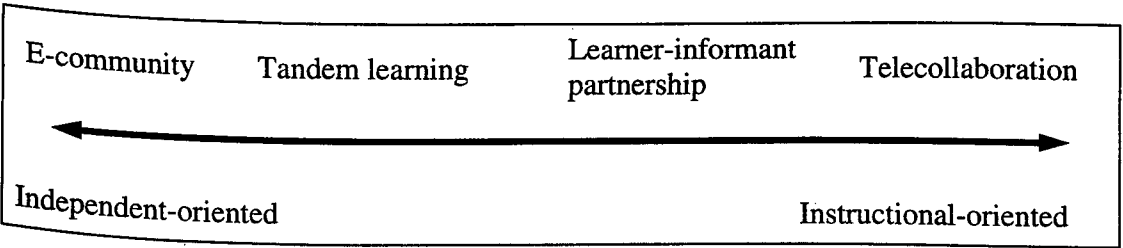


Figure 2.3 Four major models of 'ICFLE' (based on Thorne 2006)

2.4.2.2 Examples

In this section, I examine five examples that conform to Belz and Thorne's (2006) models, with attention to the processes involved in the use of different Internet technologies and practices in relation to the skills necessary for developing ICC (Byram 1997).

- ***Example 1: Telecollaboration – Furstenberg and colleagues (2001)***

Among the many telecollaborative projects, a well-known and often-cited one has been the *Cultura* model initially designed in 1997 by Furstenberg et al. (2001; see also Belz and Thorne 2006; Levy 2007; O'Dowd 2007a). The purpose was to develop students' critical perceptions of their home culture and the target culture through 'the structured juxtaposition of texts and images, the creation and interrogation of lexical and semantic networks, and the sharing of interpretations of these data by participants in intercultural exchanges' (Belz and Thorne 2006: xii).

According to Furstenberg et al. (ibid.), students from different cultures were engaged in a mixture of Web- and CMC-based activities (see Table 2.1). In the process of telecollaboration, they were encouraged to: 1) express their home culture through filling in online questionnaires (in L1); 2) compare and analyse the juxtaposed parallel answers contributed by both group members; 3) form hypotheses by using public opinion polls; 4) explore new knowledge about the target culture through online resources such as films and press articles from both cultures; 5) discuss their findings, including understandings of and attitudes to cultural phenomena and values; 6) negotiate cultural values and beliefs with their interlocutors; 7) reflect on what they discussed and re-construct what they understood.

| Purposes | Internet tools | Process |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To undertake Web-based intercultural communication • To create critical perceptions of the learners' home culture and the target culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A web-based platform including: online questionnaires with paralleled response section, e-forum, public opinion polls, video resources, and online newspapers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring Contributing Comparing Negotiating Reflecting Expressing Re-constructing |

Table 2.1 Based on Furstenberg et al. (2001)

Methodologically, it is clear that *Cultura* adopted a socio-constructivist approach to enabling students' active participation in activities supported by Internet-mediated tools, making intercultural learning particularly productive (Furstenberg et al. *ibid.*). Through comparing parallel answers to the same questions that embed cultural values, students not only became more aware of the complexities of culture, language and identity but also learned to develop a method for understanding a foreign culture as well as their home culture. Furthermore, students on the one hand formed general hypotheses about the socio-cultural groups through intentional exposure and observation; on the other hand they had a chance to probe the individual cultural difference from members of the target cultural group via CMC. This feature ensures a dynamic transmission between 'large culture' and 'small culture' paradigms (Holliday 1999). Another feature is its use of online resources as input to replace conventional materials such as course books, with minimal use of structured tasks. While this allows students to use up-to-date materials and enjoy flexibility of task choice, such telecollaborative learning remains demanding as it requires substantial support.

- ***Example 2: Telecollaboration – Liaw (2006)***

Adapted from the *Cultura* model, Liaw (2006) set up a telecollaboration for her (Taiwan-based) Chinese class and a partner class of tertiary-level students from the

USA, her intention being to ‘foster the growth of tertiary level EFL [English as a Foreign Language] students’ intercultural competence via English language development’ (ibid.: 54). She prepared a Web-based platform including four self-access instructional units. Each contained an article, with five questions for reading comprehension and vocabulary learning respectively in a response section. To assist her students with linguistic and semantic understanding in reading articles, she incorporated two e-referencing tools: a bilingual concordancer and an online dictionary. An e-forum was established for discussion and learners’ personal accounts were allocated so as to track down their communication history for reflection upon their own learning (Table 2.2).

| Purposes | Internet tools | Process |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn vocabulary; • To reflect upon and gain an understanding of students’ own culture • To express and discuss views of students’ own culture with peers of a different culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web-based reading materials with a response section, bilingual concordancer, online dictionary, e-forum • Authorised accounts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploring Contributing Reflecting Expressing Comparing Negotiating Re-constructing |

Table 2.2 Based on Liaw (2006)

One important feature of this project is the selection of reading articles from an English-language local magazine which publishes international visitors’ experience and perspectives. The topics (e.g. a flea market) were considered close to students’ everyday life so that they would have something familiar to talk about and it could also arouse the partner class’ interest in probing and discussing. This mirrors an intercultural approach as it provides ‘local and international contexts that are familiar and relevant to language learners’ lives’ (Liaw 2006: 53) and conforms to Feng and Byram’s (2002) ‘intercultural authenticity’ concept. Another advantage corresponding with Furstenberg et al. (2001) is that EFL students were not only encouraged to

explain their own culture to peers of a different culture, but also had an opportunity to reflect upon their own culture, especially with the contribution from their peers' cultural views in the subsequent discussions.

Compared with many telecollaborative projects which put a heavy emphasis on using communication tools (see Belz and Thorne 2006; O'Dowd 2007a, b), Liaw's class made frequent use of online referencing tools. Although Liaw (ibid.) reported that her EFL students used their own pocket-size dictionary rather than the online one provided, she found that they made good use of the concordancer and even went beyond the vocabulary they were intended to learn, searching for additional articles on topics relevant to the instructional materials provided. This shows that the students initiated exploration of new information to help intercultural learning and understanding. However, like Furstenberg et al. (2001), Liaw (ibid.) kept the use of online learning resources independent, without attempting to incorporate it into regular curriculum.

- ***Example 3: Tandem learning – Telles and Vassallo (2006)***

E-tandem or teletandem learning develops from its conventional face-to-face format which requires 'reciprocal support and instruction between two learners, each of whom is a native speaker of the other's target language' (O'Rourke 2007: 43). Although tandem learning existed long before the advent of the Internet, it was Brammerts (1996, in O'Rourke 2007) who promoted the International Email Tandem Network. E-tandem learning is dedicated to learner autonomy for directing learners' own learning through using text-based and/or multi-media methods such as email, audio- and video-conferencing (O'Rourke 2007; Telles and Vassallo 2006).

Based on their face-to-face tandem learning experience in Italian-Portuguese, Telles and Vassallo (2006) developed their Teletandem BRASIL project that covered Spanish, Portuguese, French, English and Italian. The purpose was to provide Brazilian university undergraduates and students of the same level of proficiency around the world ‘with free and democratic access to online cooperative processes of learning and teaching foreign languages’ (ibid.: 8). To compensate for the geographical limitations and the asynchronicity of reading and writing through email, they adopted instant messaging, including a white board, for synchronous communication so that speaking and listening skills could be practised in a face-to-face yet mediated mode (Table 2.3).

| Purposes | Internet tools | Process |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow free access to online cooperative process of learning and teaching foreign languages and cultures • To practise speaking and listening skills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instant messaging (Windows Live Messenger), including: text and audio-visual chat, and white board, • Email | Socialising Contributing Negotiating Comparing Reflecting Expressing Editing |

Table 2.3 Based on Telles and Vassallo (2006)

According to Telles and Vassallo (2006), following a negotiated timetable, a two-hour teletandem session was divided into three phases: 1) conversation about one or more topics of students’ interest in each of the target languages, which facilitated socialising, with note-taking; 2) language feedback from the conversation based on the notes taken, focusing on the grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation. This phase involved contributing, negotiating, and editing to improve language use; 3) shared reflection on the session. Students expressed and compared each other’s point of view on the use of the target languages, and reflected on their experience. As a follow-up, students also shared their learning reflections through email in the form of an essay.

It can be seen that the value of such e-tandem learning lies in the potential of the written medium to promote reflection on language form (O'Rourke 2007) as well as learner autonomy (Telles and Vassallo 2006). However, it is questionable whether error-correction in synchronous exchange did take place. It is equally unclear whether IC elements, i.e. cognitive, affective and behavioural objectives, were embedded in conversations.

- ***Example 4: Learner-informant partnership – King (2006, 2010)***

Learner-informant partnership is a newly emerging configuration that links together local expert speakers, such as heritage language populations, with foreign language students in organised partnerships. This model assimilates some features of both telecollaboration and e-tandem learning. In Blake and Zyzik's (2003, in Thorne 2006: 9) report on the partnership between Spanish language learners and Spanish heritage speakers on the same campus, they found that Internet mediation (through chat) reduced the anxieties felt by both groups and encouraged language output.

The CrossCall Project (King 2006, 2010) was initiated at University College London from 2004 to 2006, aimed at pairing school pupils who had communicative needs with undergraduates who were mature and competent speakers of the target language. This connection was undertaken through a range of collaborative activities consistent with school syllabuses, via a virtual learning environment called WebCT, where communication tools were used under the supervision of the teachers. Meeting face-to-face at the start of the project to form 'bonds of loyalty' (2006.), both pupils and students participated in activities, frequently using email and forum discussion, and used small group video conferencing and audio links (for MP3 voice recorders) for oral work (Table 2.4). Social exchanges and teaching of linguistic and cultural matters

ranged from knowledge about holidays to perspectives on ‘the different translations of the word “Education”’ (King 2006), with much of the content helping pupils research into cultural subjects for presentations. King (2006, 2010) reported an encouraging outcome with regard to the pupils’ improvement of performance and the motivational effect of using university students as the role of a ‘near-peer’ (King 2010: 448).

| Purposes | Internet tools | Process |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable one-to-one real communication (linguistic and cultural exchanges) between students and competent speakers of the target language | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WebCT system: personal web page, email, forum, podcasting, and video-conferencing | Socialising Consulting Constructing Negotiating Reflecting Contributing |

Table 2.4 Based on King (2006, 2010)

Differing from previous examples in using blended learning to link learners with their geographically proximate teachers, this approach employs physical contact at the start for participants to socialise and establish rapport in order to facilitate the follow-up interactions, which involve a cyclical process of consulting, constructing, negotiating, reflecting and producing a report. In addition to knowledge sharing, this explorative process mediated with Internet tools allows pupils to develop skills to discover, interpret, relate to and reflect on the learning content through intercultural consultation. Although these ICC elements were not explicitly stated in the project, it can be seen that CrossCall did cover the aspects of cognitive, affective and behavioural domains of ICC. However, methodologically, reliance on the interlocutors as cultural informants tends to limit the input of cultural information and more importantly, may be influenced by interlocutors’ personal bias. Another questionable element in this project is that, as King (2010: 439) acknowledges, language informants were ‘paid a small remuneration for the work’, which may undermine its validity for wide application.

- **Example 5: E-community – Cassell and Tversky (2005)**

An e-community, or Internet community, is a group of members with similar aims who engage in joint activities (Section 2.4.1.4). As an emergent approach to intercultural teaching and learning, it can either encourage learners to participate in established e-communities (Thorne 2006) or set up their own online learning communities (Corbett 2010).

Cassell and Tversky (2005) investigated an international e-forum called ‘Junior Summit ’98’ which attracted young students from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds to discuss issues that they were concerned about. This summit was initiated at Massachusetts Institute of Technology through a mailing list or a web interface which provided a translation service. A chat function was enabled and a platform was set up subsequently to display chat messages to students with only email access. The participants were grouped geographically in the first four weeks and re-grouped according to 20 topics that they had voted to address in the following two weeks. Then each topic group elected two representatives for a face-to-face summit at the end of the event. The representatives were asked to lead the online groups to develop their topics for presentation at the summit. Each group was moderated by an adult member who ensured the availability of technical maintenance and could respond to enquiries, with minimal involvement in group interaction (Table 2.5).

| Purposes | Internet tools | Process |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To connect young people across the world via the Internet; • To empower youth to speak for themselves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum as a mailing list via email or a web interface, translation engines • Chat • Editing an online newspaper | Socialising Expressing Identifying Exploring Negotiating Contributing Reflecting Co-constructing |

Table 2.5 Based on Cassell and Tversky (2005)

Purpose built, yet without instructional design, this online summit community began by engaging participants in socialising. This was followed by students expressing and identifying issues of concern. This phase clearly demonstrated intercultural skills of discovery and relating, and a process of contributing knowledge and opinions to the whole community, with little interpersonal interaction. One phenomenon Cassell and Tversky (ibid.) noticed was that participants were aware of adapting the ways in which they expressed their opinions or objections depending on factors related to 'cultural boundaries'. In the second period more intensive interactions appeared, such as modifying ideas, developing plans, working collectively and requesting feedback from one another. This process reflected the skills of interaction and interpretation, as well as identification and formation of group membership. In the final period, some participants who failed to be elected dropped out while the remaining ones continued with dedication. They went on with the action plans developed in the previous discussion and shared tasks such as setting up a Web page for the group with a report on past group discussions. This clearly reinforced the community and group identity which had originally been diverse. This Internet community approach to institutional teaching and learning suggests that in order to sustain community dynamics and learner autonomy, meaningful tasks should be set, even without explicit instructions.

Overall, these cases represent different types of Internet-mediated intercultural approaches, from highly instructed programmes to instruction-free projects. Telecollaboration (Examples 1 and 2) and e-tandem learning (Example 3) are most frequently adopted whereas local learner-informant partnership (Example 4) and e-community (Example 5) are emerging, but less frequent. Pedagogically, all these models provide learners with a possibility of interacting with language/culture partners. Specific advantages also include collaborative learning and reflection (Examples 1 and 2), the development of autonomy

(Examples 3 and 5), and of community-building (Example 5). Form-focus is also promoted (Example 3). Specific advantages are that, in a teacher-less situation, it can be questioned whether meaningful tasks are completed (Example 5) and appropriate outcomes are reached (Example 3), and there may be questions around the use of paid assistance (Example 4). With regard to telecollaboration, it usually demands a huge effort in designing pedagogical tasks, maintaining institutional partnerships and providing substantial technical support, which institutions and individuals can often not afford to implement.

With the exception of the e-community, these models have been adopted in language projects undertaken mostly between ‘native speakers’ and ‘non-native speakers (NNSs)’. Examples from other settings, such as cross-site collaboration between non-native speakers of the target language and within-site Internet-mediated intercultural language activities, are less frequently reported. This narrows the scope for promoting an intercultural approach, which should certainly cover scenarios between NNSs of the target language used as *lingua franca*. Only a few NNS-NNS examples exist (see Basharina 2007; Wang 2009). In addition to the participant issue, all the above examples employ telecollaboration for intercultural communication. Other forms of Internet-mediated intercultural language activities, for instance, local community-based, are rarely reported. In King’s (2006, 2010) example in particular, his finding has a practical application for language classes which can afford to remunerate overseas teachers, students, business and industrial professionals and even visitors, as language and cultural informants. Complementary to formal class settings where overseas teachers are needed to teach spoken language, flexible means of intercultural contact via an online community seems make it possible to address students’ needs for offline communication. A potential pitfall might be that such participation often remains subject to change.

More importantly, one may ask what implications the research has for countries like China where economic strength and technological advance could be expected to bring about a transformation of pedagogy. Are there similar examples of Internet-mediated intercultural activities or different practices in existence that need to be identified, so that the spectrum of Internet-mediated intercultural activities can be expanded? With these issues in mind, I turn my attention to the Chinese context of tertiary English language education with reference to its ICC-oriented pedagogical practices and research on Internet-mediated intercultural teaching and learning.

2.5 Research into ICC in China's tertiary English language education

Although intercultural communication as a discipline has existed in China since the 1980s (Hu 2005), empirical research into intercultural communication for foreign/English language education remains elusive (Hu 2005; Peng 2005), mostly because there had been no publication dedicated to this in China until the first issue of *Intercultural Communication Research* in 2009 (Jia 2009). Globally, a review written by Wang and Gao (2008) of selected publications on English language education in China reveals that there has been little research into intercultural communication and education, and Internet-mediated language teaching and learning.

2.5.1 Theoretical research into ICC/intercultural approach development

Scholars in China have been committed to developing intercultural communication for, and intercultural approaches to, ELT, both before and after the official publication of the national Tertiary English Curricular Guidelines for English Majors (MoE 2000) which embeds the ICC goal. For example, Wen (1999, in Zhang and Yang 2006) contributes a

conceptual model of Intercultural Communication Competence, which comprises communicative competence and intercultural competence, as Figure 2.4 shows. Structurally identical to Byram’s (1997) ICC model, this one also fails to specify teaching and assessment objectives.

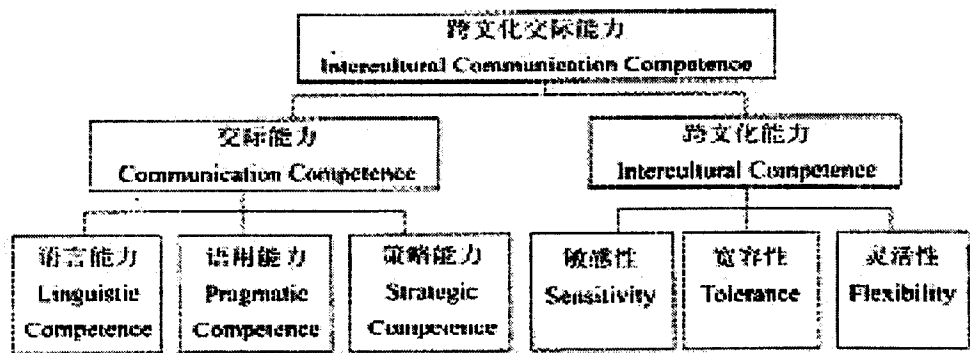


Figure 2.4 Wen (1999, in Zhang and Yang 2006)

Zhao (2002) identifies principles of culture teaching in foreign language classes, such as awareness of differences between target and home cultures, maintaining national identity and attaining cultural plurality, and advocating mutual understanding so as to improve human cultural ecology. From a macro perspective, Lu (2002) suggests developing intercultural education through institution-wide cross-disciplinary project learning, including establishing intercultural contact with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Song and Fu (2004) critically review contemporary national goals and methodologies of English language education, considering that the native-speaker goal and the CLT are inappropriate for the era of teaching English as an international language. They (2004) propose to teach English as and for intercultural communication, and suggest changes in pedagogic practice. Following Byram (1997) and Kramsch’s (1998) notion of ICC (and critical cultural awareness), the intercultural speaker and the third space, Song and Fu (2004) propose an intercultural communicative language teaching framework for the development of intercultural competence in ELT, which was further developed by Song (2008) as illustrated in Figure 2.5. Song and Fu (2004) and Song (2008, 2009) stress the

importance of cultivating learners' CC in their home 'linguaculture' (i.e. the integration of language and culture) to underpin the other components, and the process of coordination/negotiation with other speakers, including native Anglophones.

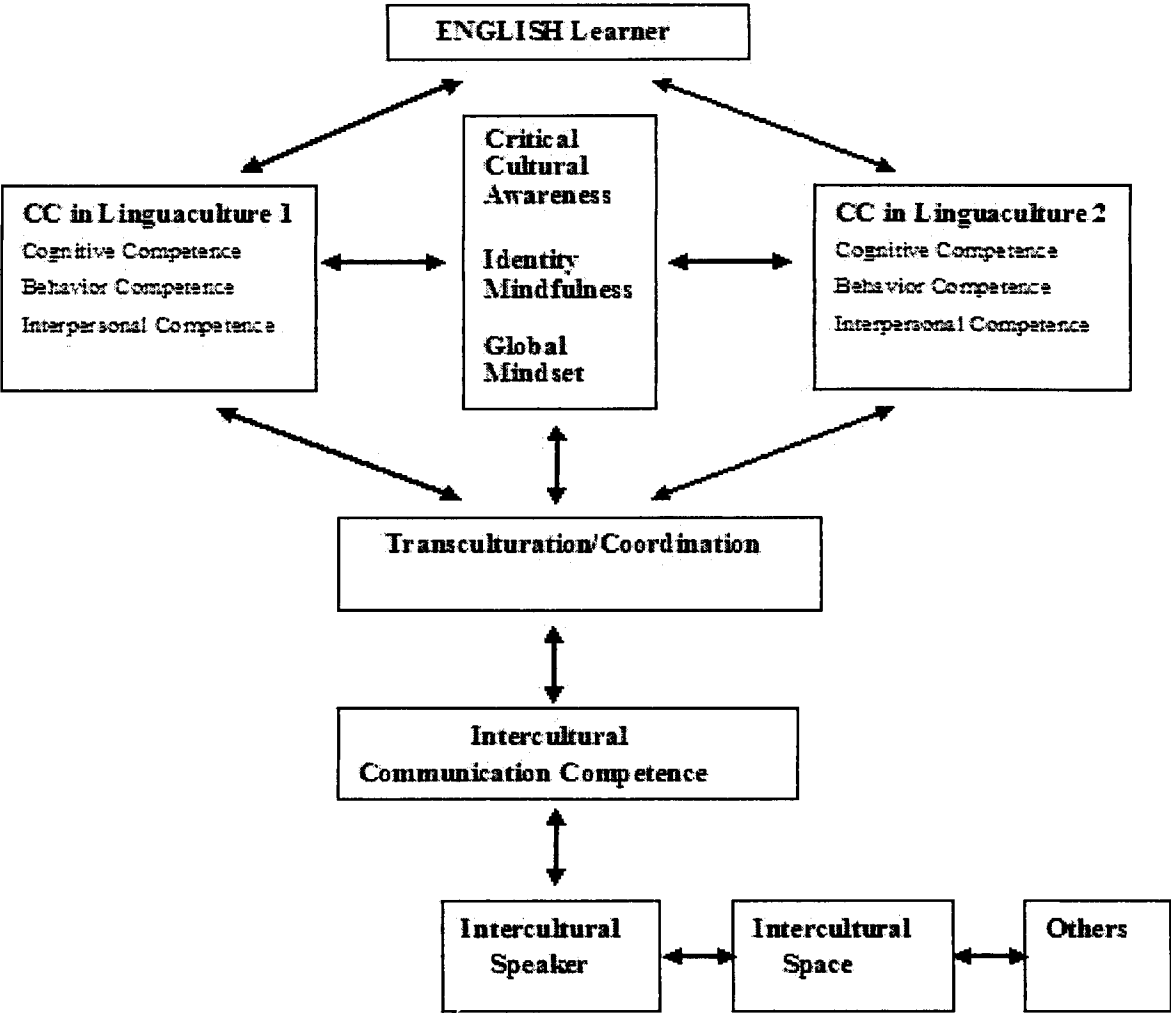


Figure 2.5 Song (2008, 2009)

Wang (2004), following Nunan's (1989) framework for teaching and analysing communicative tasks and Liddicoat's (2003, 2004) Intercultural Language Teaching (ILT) model, proposes a framework for task-based intercultural language teaching (Figure 2.6). In his framework, Wang (ibid.: 74-5) explains that linguistic and intercultural competence can be developed through carefully designed ILT tasks involving realistic meaning-focused

linguistic and communicative activities such as comprehending, producing and interacting, with both linguistic and intercultural orientations.

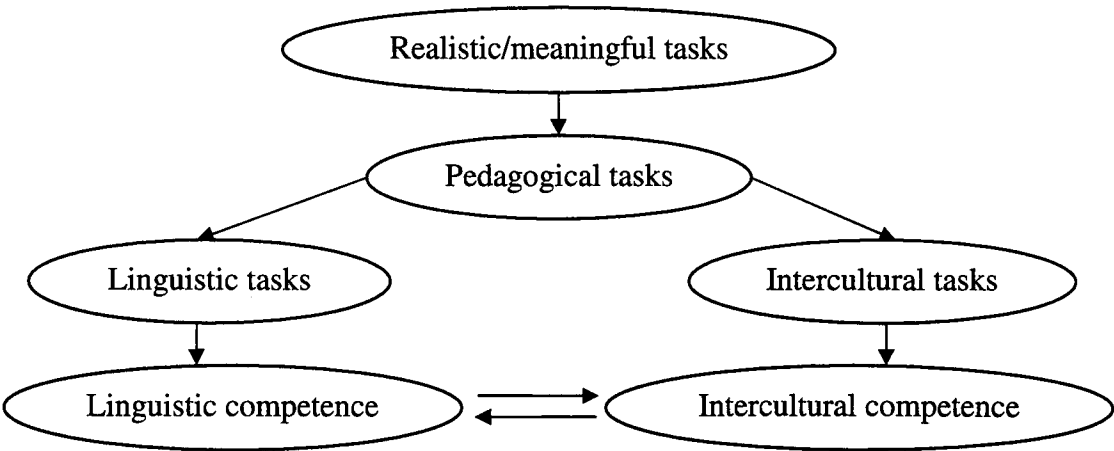


Figure 2.6 Wang (2004)

Wang (ibid.: 75) further suggests pedagogical sequences for intercultural language teaching as Figure 2.7 illustrates. However, the strictly linear process of intercultural teaching outlined in this sequential model may be simplistic. Nevertheless, these frameworks contribute to a pedagogical perspective.

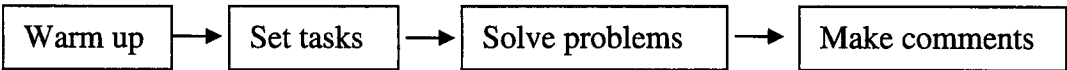


Figure 2.7 Wang (ibid.)

Jin and Cortazzi (2006), based on their developmental views of changing practices of cultures of learning in classroom settings, particularly in China, propose a model of ‘participation-based’ language learning which includes cognitive, meta-cognitive, creative, socio-cultural and affective dimensions (Figure 2.8). They stress the use of new materials as incentives to renew teachers’ practices in relatively textbook-based and teacher-centred cultures of learning. They also argue that in order to engage students in learning, teachers need to model thoughtfulness, creativity and socio-cultural awareness in their own

behaviour, give students examples of the appropriate use of English, and recognise thoughtful and creative contributions. Therefore, Jin and Cortazzi (ibid.: 17-20) prefer the ‘learning-centre’ approach to the ‘learner-centred’ one because they believe that positive aspects of Chinese traditions of learning, such as using the teacher as a model of learning, should be maintained.

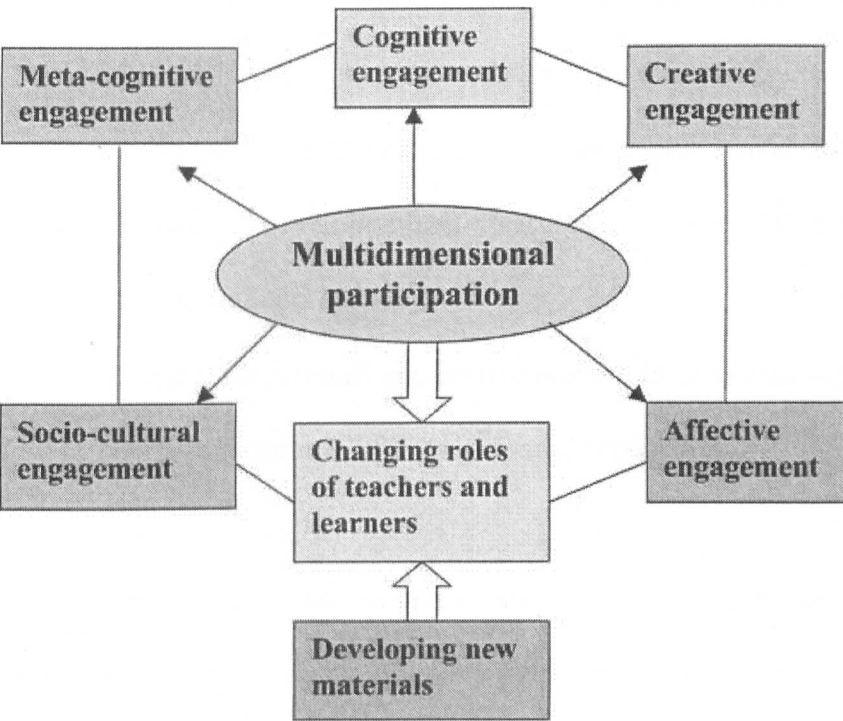


Figure 2.8 Jin and Cortazzi (2006)

Although this model does not use intercultural terminology, it incorporates IC elements (Byram 1997) and highlights the behavioural domain through the term ‘participation’, ‘the key learning-centred element of engaging students in active learning of lesson content’ (Jin and Cortazzi 2006: 15-6). In addition, it follows from their stress on objectives such as developing new materials and encouraging students to participate in real-life intercultural activities, that this model also supports the application of Internet resources as a means of multi-dimensional participation.

Kulich (2006) proposes four 'I's - principles for an intercultural pedagogy to compensate for the cognitive knowledge transmission paradigm in ELT, suggesting that the teaching content and methodologies should be 'more inductive, more interactive, more interpretative and more interculturally interpersonal'. The four 'I's require students to:

- work in a realistic 'inductive' process, moving beyond what the teacher can offer to what the learners can locate or develop;
- manage multiple 'interactive' applications both in and outside the classroom;
- mediate and develop critical 'interpretative' skills with both a contextual and specific audience focus;
- see the 'intercultural' perspective moving from visual, experiential and situational content toward real-life interpersonal contexts.

Kulich (*ibid.*) provides an example of his students' extracurricular activities: participating in an e-learning community through a shared email box (or a discussion forum or an interactive Web page). The email box was not only an administrative platform for assignment submission and formal announcements but also a space for students to share ideas and resources, and post suggestions and queries. In addition to self-initiated interactions, students were also assigned group discussions and task-based assignments. Such an integrative approach encouraged learners to develop interculturally through a learning community.

Zhang (2007) contributes to the first ever academic monograph promoting an intercultural approach to foreign language teaching (FLT) in China. She is committed to building up a theoretical framework for intercultural FLT and the principles for an intercultural foreign language curriculum, from syllabus to teaching materials, evaluation and assessment. She

(ibid.: 199) suggests that the substance of FLT includes 1) the target language (awareness, knowledge, usage), 2) the target culture (awareness, knowledge, communication), 3) other cultures, and 4) ICC/IC (intercultural awareness, competence, practical training, research methods), as illustrated in Figure 2.9. Notably, Zhang emphasises that, when considering what to teach about ICC in class, ‘know-how’ and ‘know-why’ are as important as ‘know-what’. Therefore, a major contribution of Zhang’s intercultural syllabus is the prominent place given to the interrelationship between knowledge and practice in the intercultural learning experience.

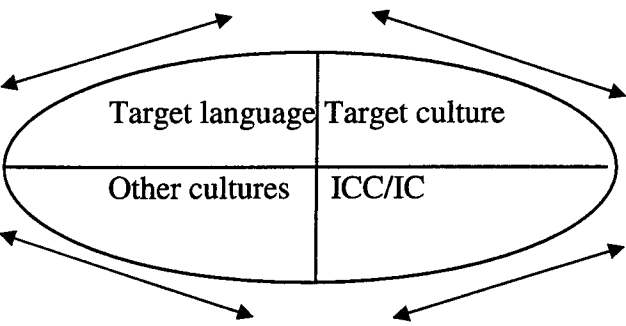


Figure 2.9 Zhang (2007)

The above models represent well-developed thinking and discussions in China, enriching theoretical perspectives on developing an intercultural approach. However, the models and the issues these scholars discuss are not addressed in the official curricula (Song 2008, 2009). In addition, with the exception of Kulich’s these models do not relate to the application of Internet technologies.

Not until very recently did Zhang (2009) develop a conceptual model of computer-mediated intercultural communication (Figure 2.10), combining language, culture and communication for ELT. In her model, Zhang (ibid: 40) uses C1 and C2 to refer to either computers or people of different cultures connected by the Internet for verbal and/or non-verbal communication. This communication mode is important for teaching design,

including teaching goals and objectives, content, tasks, procedures, and teacher and student roles, as well as evaluation and assessment methods, all of which are yet to be explored and evaluated (Zhang 2009). While this model does not provide concrete suggestions for pedagogical design, it opens a window to a new vision of Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language teaching and learning.

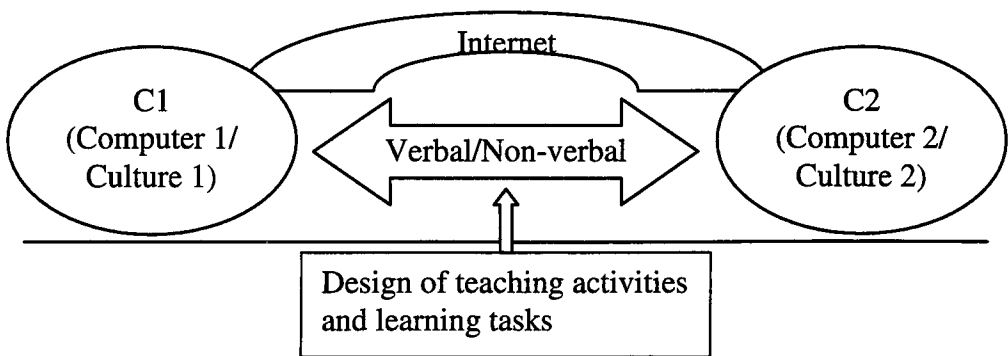


Figure 2.10 Zhang (2009)

2.5.2 Empirical research into the application of Internet technologies

Alongside theoretical research into ICC constructs, the number of studies on the application of computer/Internet technologies in language classes is growing too. Despite the fact that many publications only discuss theories originating outside China, empirical studies mainly involve Chinese contexts of practitioner research.

Gu (2006) and her colleagues are among the pioneers of project-based CALL teaching approaches. Since the first CALL programmes were established in Chinese HEIs in 1997 (Gu and Xu 1998/2006), they have conducted a series of programmes focusing on project-based learning, collaborative learning, and e-literacy over a decade. They find that CALL-based collaborative learning is conducive to language learning, although demanding and time-consuming for both teachers and students. For example, Gu and Xu (1999/2006) reported their students' participation in the 'Cities Project', a collaborative email writing

exchange with an American university. The authors summarised a number of benefits of telecollaboration, such as authentic interaction, with enriched language exposure and output, and enhanced motivation and engaged learning for learner autonomy development. In a web-based technical writing project for college students in collaboration with US partners, Gu (2002/2006) found that, in addition to such benefits, her students were able to learn to be more critical when processing information from the Web, or from their partners, whose messages they had previously taken for granted. Equally, the students became more sensitive towards cultural differences during both intercultural and intra-cultural communication. However, Gu (ibid.) also observed that her students' lower level of language proficiency and limited cultural knowledge impeded effective communication, which affected their American partners' enthusiasm for in-depth discussion. Restricted Internet access and lack of authoritative assessment support were considered additional constraints to sustainable development. Xu and Warschauer (2004) reviewed an array of CALL-based programmes and concluded that, despite the teachers' and students' commitment, without the institution's full support, from policy to finance to technology, such a drive was hard to sustain. Within her own classes, Fang (2006) used a project-based CALL approach to promote learner autonomy. Her study revealed that teacher support, new constructivist pedagogy and a favourable CALL environment were facilitating factors while students' misconception and disinclination, project management problems and inadequate technical conditions were obstacles.

While the above cases were reported mainly from the same institution, there are individual efforts in other institutions, although their presence is less systematic. For instance, transnational email writing projects are seen as contributing to writing skills, collaborative learning and intercultural communication (Pan and Rong 2000; Wang and Aaltonen 2004; Zhang 2005). These projects have international partners, so both teachers and students

need to negotiate an agenda first and to carry out discussions based on the agenda, often in a process of four stages: self-introduction/socialising, discussion and writing, commenting, and publishing (Pan and Rong 2000; Zhang 2005). It is believed that the value of such email projects relies in students' gaining an understanding of each other's society and culture through individual perspectives. Pan and Rong (*ibid.*) found that their students actively used the target language to explore various aspects of US society, to introduce Chinese culture and society to their American partners, and to achieve mutual understanding. Zhang (*ibid.*) concluded that this project helped students to develop writing skills, collaborative learning and intercultural communicative competence. Wang and Aaltonen (*ibid.*) also reported a positive result among students from China and Finland practising English in the context of international business negotiations. Such real life communication is deemed valuable in that students have learned knowledge and skills about and through intercultural communication, a mode that is never available in textbooks (Pan and Rong *ibid.*). However, these studies are descriptive rather than analytical.

More recently, blogs have been used as a platform for developing writing projects, for collecting and sharing resources, and for reflective thinking and intercultural communication (Chai, Qin and Cui 2006; Wang 2008; Zhuang et al. 2010), for oral English training with QQ chat (Zhang, Dou and Huang 2007), for teaching practice with chat (Xiao and Long 2007) and for web-based communication via a platform (Zhang, Lu and Fan 2007). Again, although some studies claimed to use an experimental or survey design, no strict procedures were followed and the results amounted to a summary of experiences and reflections. Yet lessons can be learned from such practices about the barriers which may arise, such as lack of a good online learning environment, limited time for students to conduct blogging activities, due to cost constraints, limited time for teachers

to create and integrate resources or offer feedback, inadequate information literacy among students, low levels of learner autonomy, and inadequate technical maintenance.

Research into courseware-based learning platforms seems scarce, compared to the huge investment in promoting learner autonomy through networked learning. It may be that practices go unreported, particularly if results are negative (Lamy and Hampel 2007: 12). Yan, Liu and Qu (2005) and Zhang and Li (2008) investigated the effect of courseware-based learning platform implementation and neither found positive results. Students, it was reported, refused to be forced to conduct self-study with courseware-based learning. In addition to research focusing on language teaching and learning in institutional settings, there also emerges an interest in investigating English language learners' informal experiences in social networks (such as an online English club) as a way of pursuing English language competence, as Gao (2007, 2009) reveals. However, no research work has been reported on institution-based online language learning communities in China. Similarly, the majority of e-China UK programmes (Spencer-Oatey 2007) are descriptive in nature and little empirical research has been done with regard to the e-learning effectiveness for ICC-oriented development.

This summary suggests that blended learning has frequently been adopted because it suits the scenarios of teaching and learning English in China. However, research into online community-based learning remains far from the mainstream of research on classroom-based practices in current tertiary English education in China. This gap in research reflects the fact that task/project-based language learning and teaching with technological mediation is still in its infancy in China's higher education institutions, regardless of the increasing accessibility of Internet tools.

2.6 A statement of research questions

2.6.1 Identifying research gaps

From the above review of the literature both globally and locally, some gaps can be identified. Globally, although a range of Internet-mediated intercultural language activities have been developed and an associated research discipline has emerged, the focus has been predominantly on telecollaboration, especially between native speakers and non-native speakers. Other scenarios such as exchanges between and within non-native speaker groups are rarely observed. Locally, research on ICC development and computer/Internet technologies for language classes develop in parallel but seldom meet. On the one hand, there is theoretical discussion on and contribution to interculturalising ELT in China's tertiary FLE (Zhang 2007; Song 2008) but such a theme has not been intensively explored and often lacks support from empirical data. On the other hand, research into classroom interactions and the application of computer/Internet tools to language classes has been increasing. However, studies seem to show more interest in autonomous learning than in aspects of ICC. There has been no identified report on the integration of textbooks, Internet technologies and tasks for intercultural teaching and learning. Methodologically, most studies were single cases following an experimental design; there has been hardly any action research, or systematic nation-wide evaluation of the effect of computer/Internet technologies on language programmes and in particular, the pursuit of ICC goals. In general, an integral perspective in research into how ICC development aligns with Internet technology remains little explored.

2.6.2 Research questions

As a result of the above discussion, I put forward the following research questions (RQs) as the central enquiries that are to be answered in the rest of the thesis. The first three questions are exploratory and the last one evaluative.

- ***RQ1: How are the ICC dimensions manifested in the language class?***

First, if ICC is an overall structure, it is necessary to identify the components of ICC that are embodied in various types of language classes. Are culture and intercultural communication taught as content? Or as communication? Or through communication? Or a mixture of these?

- ***RQ2: What Internet tools are used for language activities?***

Secondly, as determined by the theme of the thesis, the language activities for investigation must be Internet-mediated to a certain degree, in or outside class, by individuals or in groups. It is important to identify what kind of Internet tools are usually used in tertiary English language classes.

- ***RQ3: How is the use of Internet tools shaped by local educational context?***

Thirdly, in connection with RQ2, any use of Internet tools is conditioned by local context, including socio-institutional, political, pedagogical, technological and individual factors. Therefore, it is important to investigate the local context of education so as to achieve a holistic understanding of pedagogical practices with Internet mediation in China.

- ***RQ4: Can Internet-mediated practices evidenced in the study facilitate an intercultural approach to teaching and learning?***

Most importantly, Internet-mediated practices evidenced in the study must be evaluated, with regard to their pros and cons, commonalities and diversities, in accordance with the question of the formation of an intercultural approach to teaching and learning, i.e. the central theme of this thesis.

In Chapter 3 I will address the methodological questions surrounding these issues and formulate a research design that aims to answer them. In Chapter 4, I will report how I conducted fieldwork in order to find answers to RQs 1, 2 and 3. In Chapters 5 and 6, I will present my findings. In Chapter 7, I will discuss all the questions with a focus on RQ4.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 *Overview*

Chapter 2 showed that while theories and models of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning have been enriched with a range of empirical studies in western-focused FLE, little is known about the situation elsewhere, such as in China, where the literature about such practices and studies is limited. This gap lends itself to further investigation and a set of research questions have been proposed (Section 2.6).

To answer these questions, it is important to consider some broader issues of the research design and its philosophical underpinning. Quoting Arbnor and Bjerke (1997: 5), Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001: 59) warn that ‘You can never empirically or logically determine the best approach. This can only be done reflectively by considering a situation to be studied and your own opinion of life’. Therefore, I begin by outlining a research paradigm which informed and shaped my research design – a multi-site and multi-stage approach that was essentially qualitative-based but also incorporated quantitative elements, i.e. an integration of a survey approach and a case study approach. I go on to explain the selection of the data collection instruments. Finally, I discuss some practical issues such as access, the researcher’s role and ethical considerations that are relevant to my research context and design.

3.2 *Towards a research paradigm*

Any research design is influenced by assumptions about the nature of the world and the researcher’s way of looking at and means of getting to know the world, i.e. ontological and

epistemological assumptions respectively (Mason 2002; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Silverman 2005; Stainton-Rogers 2006). The term paradigm is used to offer ‘a way of categorising a body of complex beliefs and world views’ (Blaxter et al. 2001: 60). In knowing about the nature of the world, there are two main philosophical paradigms, namely positivist ontology and constructionist ontology (Stainton-Rogers 2006), or, respectively, realism and relativism (Robinson 2002; Richards 2003, in Jwan 2009). In essence, the former sees the world as an objective reality that is ‘completely separate from human meaning-making’, be it physical or social, whereas the latter ‘regards the world as we (human) *know* it’ (Stainton-Rogers 2006: 79, italics original) – a consequence of the subjective knowledge construction of human beings – not only how we perceive it, but also how we interpret it.

Based on this distinction, positivist epistemology holds the view that knowledge about the world can be discovered and captured through gathering facts in a systematic and objective manner (Blaxter et al. 2001; Rubin and Rubin 2005; Stainton-Rogers 2006). However, the positivist position that ‘there is a straightforward one-to-one relationship between things and events in the outside world and people’s knowledge of them’ (Stainton-Rogers 2006: 80) appears to be simplistic. In the face of severe criticism from within social research (Robson 2002), the post-positivist paradigm acknowledges that social reality can only be known ‘imperfectly and probabilistically’ (Blaxter et al 2001: 61) due to the limitations of research methods. However, still committed to objectivity (Robson 2002), post-positivists believe that reality can be approximated by applying multiple research methods (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 11). Nevertheless, it still ‘maintains the same set of basic positivism’ (ibid.).

By contrast, Stainton-Rogers (ibid.) labels the opposite position ‘constructionist’ epistemology, which recognises ‘the existence of a real, material world’ but denies that there is only one single reality. Robson (2002) also notes that there are different labels such as ‘constructivist’, ‘naturalistic’ and ‘interpretive’ to refer to the same position.

Constructionism argues that knowledge about the world, whether it is from natural or social science, is a representation of the world, which is constructed and ‘made real’ by individuals who are socio-contextually bound (Blaxter et al. 2001; Mason 2002) and allows different perspectives (Rubin and Rubin 2005). Hence, the world is ‘socially constructed’ (Robson 2002: 27), consisting of multiple realities which shape and are shaped by human perceptions and interpretations. Rubin and Rubin (2005) further highlight the understanding of ‘shared meanings held by those in a *cultural arena*’ and they contend that interpretative constructionist researchers ‘make cultural assumptions that influence what they ask and how they construe what they hear’ (ibid.: 29, italics original).

Concurrent with the two major paradigms, there are also post-modernist and critical paradigms of social science research. Postmodernism, while having some common ground with the constructionist paradigm in terms of acknowledging the complex world and rejecting the researcher’s neutrality, assumes that the ‘researcher’s view is only one among many [...] people being studied. It is important [...] to present a range of views and conclusions, in as nearly raw a fashion as possible [...] with little interpretive overlay’ (Rubin and Rubin 2005: 27). This deconstructive view seeks to obtain ‘locally, temporally and situationally limited narratives’ (Flick 1998:2, in Blaxter et al. 2001) only, leading to what Rubin and Rubin (2005: 27) describe as ‘a dilemma about whose voice is and ought to be communicated’ since the author’s voice is not privileged. The critical category consists of paradigms such as feminism, Marxism, anti-racism and others. Although distinct from each other, they, as the generic label suggests, all critique both

positivism/post-positivism and constructionism (Blaxter et al. 2001) in that researchers from both paradigms are seen as more powerful than those researched (Robson 2002). Critical researchers usually deal with imbalances in gender, class, race, disability, and power, seeking ways of changing or overcoming them.

Given the above arguments, I accept the relativist ontological philosophy and choose to work within the constructionist epistemological paradigm which I think is more appropriate and relevant for the purpose of my research.

3.3 Research design and rationale

de Vaus (2001: 8-9) compares research design to constructing a building: until it is decided what kind of building is to be built, there is no point drawing a plan, working out a schedule or ordering materials. Therefore, it is necessary to make clear the research contexts and aims before adopting the right approaches among an array of research designs.

3.3.1 The context and purpose of the research

With regard to HEIs in China, broadly, five types of institution offer English language programmes: an ordinary type, a language-focused type, a college/institute type, an international partnership type, and a distance education type. Although different in character and focus, they all offer English education in two strands: English major-oriented and non-English major-oriented, under the regulation of the Ministry of Education. Regarding the level of English education offered, the first two types provide both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes whereas the last two only provide undergraduate ones. The college/institute type varies according to the institutional nature and status. As regards scenarios of English education, except for the last type which is

predominantly distance-based (with occasional on-site face-to-face tutorials), the rest adopt a blended mode, although the degree to which they do this varies. Table 3.1 provides a matrix of English language education provision in China.

| Types of HEIs | English education | Scenarios |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Ordinary universities | B-level and M-level English majors and non-English majors | Blended |
| Language-focused universities | B-level and M-level English majors and non-English majors | Blended |
| Colleges/Institutes | B-level and/or M-level English majors and non-English majors | Blended |
| Int’l partnership universities | B-level English majors and/or non-English majors | Blended |
| Distance institutes | B-level English majors and non-English majors | Distance |

Table 3.1 A matrix of English education provision in China’s HEIs

Table 3.1 offers a conceptual categorisation but in reality the diversity of geographical scale and economic development (Feng 2009; Wang and Coleman 2009) complicates the picture. It is unlikely that all HEIs follow these models precisely. Rather, the Ministry of Education (2000, 2004) recommends that varieties of practice should be developed within local contexts and that the national syllabuses should be used as general guidelines. For example, compared with the institutions in inland areas, the ones in coastal areas, where the economy is more developed, have easier access to better educational resources. Similarly, within any particular region, institutions located in economically and culturally central cities are better supported than the more remote institutions (Feng 2009). In a single region, institutions of different types may differ in English language education provision and development. Even in a single institution, including international partnerships, it is possible to find different types of English language programmes. This diversity of educational contexts makes the interface of English education with the specific goals of ICC development, allied with computer and Internet technology use, particularly significant in comparison with other education contexts in the world (Wang and Coleman 2009).

Therefore, the purpose of this research is first of all to understand the current situation of Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education at tertiary level in China and to ‘get under the skin’ (Gillham 2000: 11) of some targeted organisations to find out what really happens, and what the potential for further development might be. To better explain these aims, Figure 3.1 sets out some important dimensions of the research design in relation to national syllabuses for English majors and non-English majors.

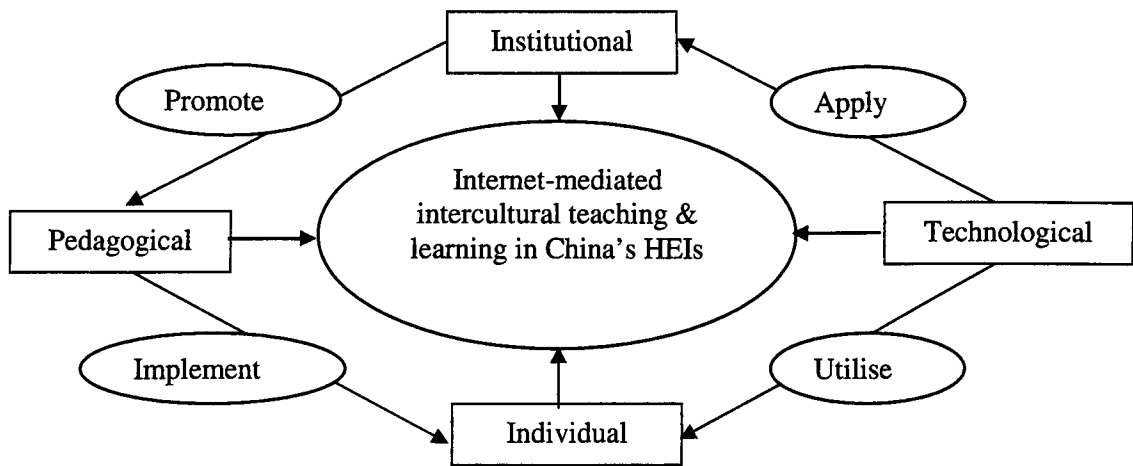


Figure 3.1 Factors in Internet-mediated intercultural teaching and learning

In Chapter 1 it was identified that 1) the goal of ICC development has been officially recognised but is without a specific framework; 2) information literacy, i.e. using computers and the Internet for learning and teaching, has been promoted (but not made mandatory due to the uneven development of regional economy) with the principal intention of enhancing learner autonomy. These conditions relate to four factors: the institutional, the individual, the pedagogical and the technological. It is important to question whether and how ICC is understood as a pedagogical goal in English language programmes, bearing these factors in mind. It is equally important to observe how and why computer and Internet tools are applied by the institution and used by individuals for their pedagogical activities. It is especially important to examine whether the use of computer

and Internet technologies can facilitate an intercultural approach to teaching and learning. These factors are inter-related and include cognitive, behavioural and affective aspects for investigation. Such a complex context requires a well-defined research framework which reflects its dynamics and diversity.

3.3.2 The quantitative-qualitative debate

The function of a research design, as de Vaus (2001: 9) states, is ‘to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible.’ Yin further points out that research design is a ‘*logical*’ problem, not a ‘*logistical*’ (2003: 21, original italics) one. Research designs to investigate social settings vary according to the nature of enquiry and the research questions. With regard to research in educational settings, two approaches, a scientific approach and a naturalistic approach, are identified as being consistent with the two main epistemological paradigms discussed above, as explained by Burns (2000: 3, in Blaxter et al. 2001: 63):

‘[A] scientific approach is often termed nomothetic and assumes social reality is objective and external to the individual. The naturalistic approach to research emphasises the importance of the subjective experience of individuals, with a focus on qualitative analysis. Social reality is regarded as a creation of individual consciousness, with meaning and the evaluation of events seen as a personal and subjective construction.’

This view clearly informs two main methodological approaches to social and educational research, i.e. quantitative and qualitative research strategies or traditions (Blaxter et al. 2001; Robson 2002; Silverman 2005). The differentiation between the two types is the breadth-depth divide. Blaxter et al. (2001: 64) explain that quantitative research is

concerned with the collection and analysis of 'large-scale and representative sets of data' in numeric form whereas qualitative research focuses on exploring information from smaller numbers of examples in as many forms, in as much as detail as possible.

Hammersley (1992) notes that quantitative research became predominant by the 1940s and 50s in fields like sociology and psychology while qualitative research saw a revival in the 1960s. Subsequently, there was an increased interest in the combination or integration of both (Dörnyei 2007), despite the perceived dichotomy. Hammersley (1992: 40) argues that such a dichotomy should be deconstructed on the grounds that there is such a 'variety of ideas, strategies and techniques to be found in social research' that they 'cannot be encapsulated within two [or more] paradigms'. Rather, seeing qualitative and quantitative methodologies as not necessarily 'mutually exclusive', researchers can take the relative merits of each one and strive to mix them within their own research projects 'with the hope of offering the best of both worlds' (Dörnyei 2007: 20). Silverman (2005: 6-8) also questions the qualitative-quantitative divide and suggests that the selection of the strategy depends on the purpose of the particular research.

3.3.3 Multi-site and multi-stage fieldwork

Blaxter et al. (2001: 66-67) summarise four basic designs for research in social sciences: experiments, case studies, surveys, and action research. Succinctly, the first tends to be quantitative in nature and rooted in realism (Robson 2002), while the other three can be used within either qualitative or quantitative research strategies. Also, the first three approaches may be employed as part of desk-based or field-based research strategies whereas the last tends to engage with fieldwork, although the boundary between deskwork and fieldwork has been blurred by the application of Internet-mediated information and communication technologies (Mann and Stewart 2000; Blaxter et al. 2001; Hine 2005).

Action research is 'a complex, dynamic activity involving the best efforts of both members of communities or organizations and professional researchers [to produce] tangible and desired results for the people involved' (Greenwood and Levin 1998: 50, in Blaxter et al. 2001: 67). In the recent literature action research has been reported as a mainstream approach in empirical studies based on language classrooms, in particular with Internet mediation (O'Dowd 2006, 2007a; Lamy and Hampel 2007). A good example of action research is O'Dowd (2006) an array of online intercultural projects undertaken over several years by the researcher-practitioner. However, since action research aims at changing and improving things and engages an intervention from the researcher (Nunan 1992; Blaxter et al. 2001), it does not suit my research purpose which is to understand the investigated situation as in its natural settings as possible.

Similarly, an experimental or quasi-experimental fieldwork-based study does not serve my research purpose since there is an intervention from the researcher and direct access to the sample. Shi (2006) conducted a semi-experimental study to investigate the attitudes, obstacles and potential of using the Internet as a resource for learning culture. While the research results were positive, she reported time management problems among the informants. As Hammersley (2004: 93) observes, in social science research there tends to be a preference for naturally occurring settings over 'artificially created' ones, although good practices with quasi-experimental designs (Shadish and Clark 2004) may provide a database to support empirical studies subsequently.

Surveying is a research strategy that is commonly used as a quantitative approach for almost any research purposes in social contexts (Robson 2002; de Vaus 2004; Sapsford 2007). While many people use surveys for explanatory and interpretive purposes, their

primary function is descriptive, providing ‘information about the distribution of a wide range of “people characteristics” and of relationships between such characteristics’ (Robinson 2002: 234). Hammersley (2004: 92) contrasts surveys with case studies, suggesting that surveys ‘study a large number of cases but usually gather only a relatively small amount of data about each one’. This superficial characteristic of surveys is often considered insufficient for understanding the complexity of human phenomena (Robinson 2002; Dörnyei 2003). Another limitation is that survey data can only ‘provide snapshots of points in time rather than a focus on the underlying processes and changes’ (Blaxter et al. 2001: 79). At the practical level, survey results may lack credibility because of a shortage of responses or carelessness on the part of respondents (Gorard 2001; Dörnyei 2003). However, in Wang and Coleman’s (2009) report, Internet surveys were conducted due to time and budget constraints. Although the low response rate made the results inconclusive, meaningful discussions arose, when using data from follow-up email interviews. Despite their limitations, surveys can be used with other complementary designs such as case studies, as Hammersley (2004) suggests. In this regard, I have found it useful to use surveys in order to obtain at least descriptive data conveying general information about my target population.

Case studies are defined as an empirical research strategy that ‘investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context’ (Yin 2003: 13). Gillham (2000: 2) points out that ‘the naturalistic style’ of case study research is well suited to the study of human phenomena and meanings. Case studies can collect any mix of quantitative and qualitative data (ibid.: 15) with whatever methods seem appropriate (Silverman 2005; Stake 2005). It is particularly appropriate for an investigation where it is not intended to introduce interventions (de Vaus 2001: 232) but where the aim is to ‘gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved’, with an interest in ‘process rather than

outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation' (Merriam 1998: 19). Accordingly, as van Lier (2005) argues, case studies do not follow the scientific tradition in providing generalisation from an individual case to a population.

Stake (2005) classifies three types of case study approach: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. The first two types both examine the complexity of a single case, the distinction being that the former is primarily for understanding the 'particularity and ordinariness' of the case itself whereas the latter uses the case as 'a supportive role to facilitate our understanding of something else' (Stake 2005: 445-6). A collective case study, as its name indicates, looks at a number of individual cases jointly in order to understand and interpret a phenomenon, population, or general condition (ibid.). It is also known as a multiple case study (Gillham 2000; de Vaus 2001; Yin 2003; Stake 2005) or a multi-site case study (Herriot and Firestone 1983). Overall, in Stake's (2005: 460) words, the purpose of a case study report is to represent the case, not the world. It seeks to obtain 'particularization', in the hope that 'insights from a case study can inform, be adapted to, and provide comparative information to a wide variety of other cases, so long as one is careful to take contextual differences into account' (van Lier 2005: 198). Given the flexibility of the case study strategy, I adopted it as the main component of my research design.

Another approach is ethnography (Robson 2002; Yin 2003). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 3) define it as a qualitative design which

'involves the researcher participating, overtly and covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through formal and informal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry'.

Although ethnography shares some practices with case studies such as investigating the dynamic process of human phenomena in a real world, they are different not only in that case studies are generally more limited in scope, and therefore, should be more focused (de Vaus 2001) than ethnography but also because ethnographic research is interested in ‘the cultural meanings revealed by the behaviour of the subjects under study’ (Nunan 1992: 54) while this is not necessarily true of case studies. While this approach could have been considered for my research design, the practical issues were challenging. However, some ethnographic skills such as interviewing and participant observation were adopted for the case studies.

Among these approaches to social science and educational research, I found that a survey approach and a case study approach in combination were suitable for my research aims. Therefore I used the survey to collect teachers’ and students’ perceptions, attitudes, and practices as well as some demographic information, and also to identify the potential targets worth following up for in-depth case studies. The case studies focused on the interactions between teachers and learners with respect to the meanings and experiences of their Internet-mediated language teaching and learning activities. I adopted a multiple case study design, as de Vaus (2001: 227) recommends, because it is ‘more powerful and convincing and provide[s] more insights than single case designs’, given that sufficient resources and access were guaranteed. At the same time, being the only researcher available, I had to follow a reasonably sequential design where case studies would follow one another. Taken together, these considerations suggested a multi-stage and multi-site approach. I hoped that such coverage would allow me to examine diverse contexts in order to identify both commonalities and particularities among cases (Hammersley 2004).

In practice, I did not have a position at any of the institutions, nor did I have a firm relationship with a particular partner teacher or an institution in China during the time of conducting this research, which meant that it was unrealistic for me either to intrude into a territory to undertake action research or experimental studies, or to attempt an ethnographical approach, living and observing intensely with a target community of teachers and students for an extended period of time in a particular educational institution. This made it possible for me to move beyond relying on a restricted scope of investigation at one site, to a multi-site option.

3.3.4 Sample selection

As shown in Section 3.3.1, the target population comprised English language teachers and students from Chinese HEIs. The underlying assumption was that the research was ‘to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned’ (Merriam 1998: 61). While I realised that a probability sampling technique (Sapsford 2007) was ideal for my survey design, it seemed unlikely that I would be able to apply statistical sampling techniques considering my limited access to the whole population. Hence, a realistic approach to survey sampling was opportunity sampling and network sampling (Dörnyei 2003; Sapsford 2007). Since this study primarily adopted a case study approach, as is the case with most qualitative research, non-probability sampling would be the appropriate choice (Merriam 1998; Silverman 2005).

As clarified earlier, the purpose of the case studies was not to generalise to a wider sample of cases, so there was no point in trying to find a typical case for a case study (de Vaus 2001; Stake 2005). Silverman (*ibid.*) argues that sampling in qualitative research is neither statistical, nor purely personal, but it should be theoretically grounded. Thus, it is the researcher’s responsibility to select ‘information-rich cases’ (Patton 1990: 169, in Merriam

1998: 61) which can reveal ‘a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research’. de Vaus (2001: 239-242) recommends a strategic selection, which means that since we know something of the characteristics of a case we want to focus on, extensive case screening needs to be conducted before actual cases are finally selected. This is also known as purposive or purposeful sampling (Merriam 1998; Robson 2002; Yin 2003; Silverman 2005; Stake 2005). With regard to my design, criteria for selection were formulated as follow: 1) English classes in higher education institutions, 2) with Internet mediation, and 3) for intercultural activities, although the last of these could be implicit. To make the selection, two main options were available: firstly, through personal networking and snowballing, and secondly through literature and Internet searches. Meanwhile, I took the advice of Lincoln and Guba (1985, in Merriam 1998) that the sampling process should continue ‘until a point of saturation or redundancy is reached’. When a list of candidate institutions was decided, email contacts could be made to double check the accuracy of the messages in the previous contacts. When a confirmation was made, requests for fieldwork permission in the form of Informed Consent Letters (Appendix A) could be made and subsequent details negotiated and agreed upon. The details of sampling selection are reported as part of the fieldwork (and deskwork) experience in Chapter 4.

3.4 Methods

Silverman (2005) notes that while most research methods can be used in research based on either qualitative or quantitative methodologies, researchers should not apply them dogmatically. Quoting Mason (1996: 19), he (2005: 109) explains that ‘choice of methods should correspond to an ‘overall research strategy’ as methods are shaped by methodology. The combination of survey and case study approaches in this research required different methods of data collection for different purposes. One of the methodological considerations of using multiple methods is that this gives ‘a sense of richness and complexity to an

inquiry’ (Bryman 2004: 1143). The other concern is to triangulate or corroborate data gathered from different sources (Mason 1996: 25, in Silverman 2005: 121; Yin 2003).

This research consisted of four main instruments for data collection, i.e. questionnaire survey, interview, observation, and document. In the first survey stage, for example, in order to synthesize the participants’ background information and to uncover their attitudes and perceptions, questionnaire surveys and interview surveys seemed appropriate for working with a wide range of potential cases. As the selection progressed and the cases were singled out, observation and interview might help to further deepen the investigation of each case. Equally, a collection of documents or products would enrich understanding of the contexts. It was hoped that the intentionally broad and preliminary information gathering, and the sample selection, would help identify some interesting cases and issues that might have been unanticipated and might provide ‘a more complete set of findings than could be arrived at through the administration of one of the methods alone’ (Bryman 2004: 1142). The integration of the methods and their relationships are illustrated in Figure 3.2. Table 3.2 maps the research instruments on to the research questions in detail. The following sections specify each data collection instrument and consider its pros and cons.

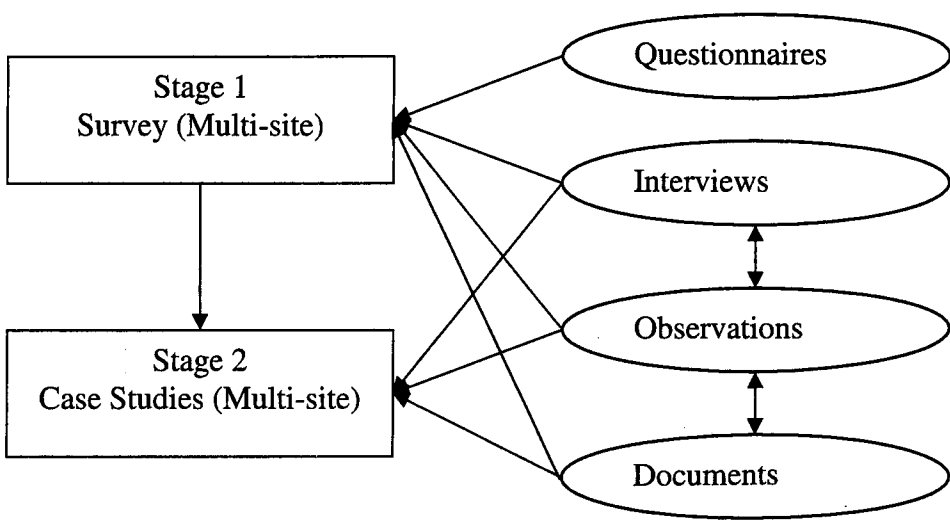


Figure 3.2 Methods of the research design

| Research Questions | Questionnaires (SQ – pp. 375, TQ – pp. 383) | Interviews (TI – pp. 390, SI – pp. 391) | Observations (pp. 392) | Learning Diaries (pp.393) |
|---|--|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| <i>1. How are the ICC dimensions manifested in the language class?</i> | TQ1-5 SQ1-5 | TI1 , 2 SI1 | O16 | ‘Topic’ ‘Objectives’ |
| <i>2. What Internet tools are used for language activities?</i> | TQ7, 8 SQ7, 8, 9 | TI4 SI3 | O13, 14, 15 | ‘Online tools’ |
| <i>3. How is the use of Internet tools shaped by local educational context?</i> | TQ6, 9, 10 SQ6, 10 | TI3, 5, 6 SI2, 5, 7 | O4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16 | ‘Location of learning’ ‘Context of learning’ |
| <i>4. Can Internet-mediated practices evidenced in the study facilitate an intercultural approach to teaching and learning?</i> | | TI7, 8 SI4, 6, 8 | O16 | ‘Experience’ ‘Evidence’ |
| Note: T-Teacher, S-Student, Q-questionnaire, I- interview, O-observation | | | | |

Table 3.2 Research questions and instrument items

3.4.1 Questionnaires

Using questionnaires in social sciences is one of the main techniques for collecting descriptive and factual information about populations (de Vaus 2004). There are several benefits to this choice. Firstly, it enables the quick collection of a large amount of information (Dörnyei 2003) and removes the obstacle of distance (Moore et al. 1998), especially through online delivery (Hine 2005). Secondly, as Fowler (2002) suggests, when used as a self-administered instrument, an electronic questionnaire allows respondents sufficient time for careful thinking and checking of answers. For the researcher, it enables repeated contacts and reminders. Moreover, a questionnaire delivered via the Internet appears more user-friendly, making it easier for participants to return the answers, since the network supports high-speed, immediate returns. In addition, an electronic questionnaire survey lends itself easily to computerisation and initial analysis (Fowler 2002; Dörnyei 2003). In terms of the cost, it is perhaps the cheapest of the various instruments (Fowler 2002).

However, the drawbacks in using questionnaire surveys, as discussed in Section 3.3.3, are its potential superficiality, fragmentation of the process and low creditability of the data collected. Apart from these inherent weaknesses, the data may also be affected by respondents' carelessness or the fatigue effect of reading, or reluctance to complete the questionnaire (Dörnyei 2003). In addition, the problems of respondent self-selection and low rate of response will make the sample less representative (Fowler 2002; Dörnyei 2003). In a face-to-face context, a survey may get a better response rate, although it is more time consuming for the researcher (Blaxter et al. 2001: 179). Practically, I took both forms into account, using the online mode to save delivery time and printing costs and the paper version as a back-up in case online access was disabled or computers broke down.

Two self-completed questionnaires (Appendix B; also Table 3.2) similar in content and structure were used for teachers (TQ) and students (SQ) so as to elicit comparable data on several aspects of the Internet-mediated experiences of intercultural activities in the classroom. The teacher's questionnaire was written in English, but for the students a Chinese translation was provided since their English language proficiency varied. They were presented in order, from opinion measurement (teachers' and students' attitudes and beliefs, TQ/SQ1-5) to behaviour measurement (teachers' and students' practices, TQ/SQ6-10), followed by personal information. The reason for this flow, as Lavrakas (2004: 903) suggests, was to minimise the influence of opinion and attitudinal questions on the answers to behavioural and knowledge questions.

3.4.2 Interviews

Interviewing is defined as conducting 'guided conversations' with one person eliciting information from another or others (Merriam 1998; Yin 2003). In social sciences and educational research, interviewing is considered a major method of data collection, for

‘understanding the ways in which people live in and construct their everyday lives and social worlds’ (Warren 2004: 524) from the interviewee’s point of view. In other words, the purpose of interviewing is ‘to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind’ (Patton 1990: 278, in Merriam 1998: 23). It is a necessary tool for finding out what people think, feel, expect and interpret – in any situation where direct observation is not possible (Patton 1990, in Merriam 1998: 72). It has three variations according to its structure, i.e. structured, semi-structured and open-ended (Merriam 1998). As Merriam (1998: 72) acknowledges, interviewing can serve the purpose of both intensive case studies of a few selected individuals and studies of a large number of people representing a broad range of ideas. Interviews can be carried out with either groups or individuals. According to Fontana and Frey (2005: 703), group interviewing gathers data from the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously in formal or informal settings. While it has the potential to encourage a wide range of perspectives from the interviewees, it equally runs the risk of ‘groupthink’ between the interviewees (ibid.: 705). Individual interviewing, on the other hand, is a powerful tool for probing responses to complex and deep issues, without distraction from other parties. However, as interviewing is not a neutral data gathering tool but rather an active process constructed and negotiated by both the interviewer and the respondent(s), there inevitably exists subjectivity on the part of the interviewer (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007), causing problems of bias, poor recall, and inaccurate articulation (Yin 2003).

In my research, despite the seemingly easier and more cost-effective way to conduct group interviews with students who usually shared a timetable and could be gathered together on campus, and to carry out individual interviews with teachers who had flexible time schedules, I did not maintain a hard division between these methods. In order to make sense of what the respondents thought about certain issues and their attitudes towards

certain events, semi-structured interviews were applied to students and teachers in a flexible manner. Interview questions (Appendix C; also Table 3.2, page 91), centring on teachers' and students' understandings of the goal of ICC (TI1-2, SI1), their use of Internet tools TI4, SI3), their activity designs (TI5, SI5) and the challenges (TI6, SI7) in Internet-mediated intercultural activities, were given in English with verbal Chinese explanations whenever necessary so as to ensure that students and teachers fully understood the questions being asked. They might use their native Chinese in order to express their ideas most accurately. Audio-recording was used with permission for the purpose of concentrating on interactions in interviews and note-taking was employed as a complementary technique (Blaxter et al. 2001: 173), in case permission for audio-recording was refused (Yin 2003).

3.4.3 Observations

Observation is 'one of the fundamental techniques of research conducted by sociologists, cultural anthropologists and social psychologists [for the purpose of recording] group activities, conversations, and interactions as they happen and to ascertain the meanings of such events to participants' (Angrosino 2004: 753). According to Merriam (1998: 96), conducting observation has several advantages. Firstly, observers get first-hand knowledge and experience of the context and of interaction that may not otherwise be revealed by respondents, either consciously or unconsciously. It is also used to record contextual incidents that can be used for further investigation. Dabbs (1992, in Yin 2003: 93) particularly notes that, provided that permission is obtained, one value of observation is the possibility of taking photos of the field site, which helps to convey important case characteristics to outside observers. Observation takes several forms. Yin (2003) uses a binary categorisation: participant observation and direct (or non-participant) observation. Merriam's (1998: 100-101) continuum of four categories seems more specified, from

‘complete participant’ through ‘participant as observer’ to ‘observer as participant’ and ‘complete observer’, the difference being the degree of the researcher’s involvement.

Gillham (2000: 28) argues that by becoming a temporary member of the setting, it is more likely that the researcher will get to the ‘informal reality’. Hence, an observer as participant seems suitable to my research. However, being a passive or an active observer depends not only on the research purpose, but also on practical concerns.

In this research, observations were mainly conducted in the physical settings, i.e. classrooms or computer labs, focusing on the facilities (O8-15), the classroom interactions (O16) including online presentations and interactions, with as little intervention from the researcher as possible, though it was impossible to remove the ‘observer effect’ (Gillham 2000: 47), due to the fact I needed to reveal my identity. As a participant observer, I had access to temporary membership of a community, although its members could control the level of information revealed (Merriam 1998: 101). As the observation method involves the researcher in ‘watching, recording and analysing events of interest’ (Blaxter et al. 2001: 178), I took field notes constantly and simultaneously as long as conditions allowed. In informal contexts where recording events with pen and paper was inconvenient, I found it useful to make notes as soon as observations end. In formal classroom observation, I used a semi-structured scheme (Appendix D; also Table 3.2) to ‘gather information directly without the mediation of respondents’ (Croll 2004: 1096). This selective approach enabled me to focus on the elements of interest in the situation (Nunan 1992). In addition to physical observation, I also made online observations of the field sites (Hine 2005) where participants used Internet technologies for online activities such as establishing an e-community, publishing web pages of students’ products, or setting up a platform for telecollaboration. I prepared a learning diary template (Appendix E) for informant students

to record their individual learning activities mediated by the use of the Internet outside the class and to provide evidence of, for example, the URLs and search words used.

3.4.4 Document collection

In this research, collecting documents involved materials such as course syllabuses and associates, teachers' lesson plans, student presentation files and assignments, etc. both in physical and online settings. In qualitative research the term 'document' is used to refer to 'any kind of physically embodied text' (Scott 2004: 281), or more inclusively, 'a wide range of written, visual and physical material relevant to the study at hand' (Merriam 1998: 112). In this research context, it includes teaching materials as well as student-generated materials derived from participation in language class activities.

Using documents to gather data is as important a strategy as interviewing and observing, yet it is not as widely implemented (Merriam 1998). There are drawbacks that discourage researchers from using documents confidently. Firstly, while many documents are not confidential within an organisation or institution, the public may not be well-informed about their availability. Therefore, access to their location may not be straightforward. Secondly, documents may have been produced before the research is undertaken and may therefore not have been developed to satisfy the researchers' specific needs, giving rise to problems such as incomplete data, and even mismatch between conceptual ideas (Merriam 1998). Moreover, as documents about the same research topic can vary considerably in quality and chronology, and it is sometimes difficult to determine their 'authenticity' and 'accuracy' (Merriam 1998) or 'credibility' (Scott 2004).

Despite these limitations, documents can still serve as a source of data. It is a relatively unobtrusive form of research, one which does not require the researcher to approach

respondents (Blaxter et al. 2001). In addition, the documentary data, especially physical materials, serves as first-hand evidence that is ‘grounded’ (Merriam 1998: 126) in naturally occurring settings. Furthermore, although it takes time to judge the authenticity of documents, the stability of documentary evidence, i.e. its independence from the research agenda, remains a virtue that is not afforded by interviewing or observation (Merriam 1998). Online documents and artefacts take on new characteristics (ibid.). Stability of materials is no longer a guarantee as they can be updated much more frequently than printed materials. Instead, examining the version of online materials becomes a concern (Merriam 1998; Scott 2004). Therefore, the kind of documents and artefacts collected should be as recent as the physical version of course descriptions and student portfolios.

These methods of data collection were intended to corroborate data from different resources which were analysed ‘to identify key patterns within each research site, then to make comparisons and find commonalities or differences across research sites’ (Warschauer 2008: 55). It is worth mentioning that in data collection instruments such as questionnaires and interviews compromise was made when using culture-related concepts in an essentialist way in accord with the Chinese context. In the examination of language class activities, Nunan’s (1989, 2004) task framework was adapted as Corbett (2003) contends that it is structurally clear and applicable for analysing an intercultural classroom. Hence, in Chapter 7, I discuss findings within a task framework. In the next section I examine the practical issues that are important to the design of qualitative research.

3.5 *Practical considerations*

In qualitative studies the researcher’s role and access, and ethical issues regarding the protection of both the participants and the researcher, are the key issues demanding attention throughout the research process (Blaxter et al. 2001: 154).

3.5.1 The researcher's role

Gillham (2000: 7) observes that '[a] research investigation is not neutral; it has its own dynamic and there will be effects (on individuals, on institutions) precisely because there is someone there asking questions, clarifying procedures, collecting data'. Blaxter et al. (2001) add that as mature researcher's individual demographic characteristics will inevitably impact upon the research in more or less complex ways, and will raise issues relevant to the research contexts. It is believed that first of all there is no easy way to minimise this impact and that secondly, that it may in fact be foolish to attempt it, there being no need to deny this effect (Blaxter et al. 2001; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). As Gillham (2000: 7) points out, 'Recognizing this is part of doing good research'.

As mentioned earlier, I accept the constructionist ontological paradigm. As Merriam (1998) notes, in the case of qualitative study, the primary rationale for the investigation is 'understanding', therefore, the qualitative researcher should have openness, tolerance for ambiguity and sensitivity, and should be a good communicator. Undertaking the role of investigator and primary instrument for gathering and analysing data (Merriam 1998; Gillham 2000), I was aware of my influence on the research (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), and I did everything I could to remain as open as I could in recording and recognising these effects. I bore in mind my potential influence on the context when conducting interviews, observations and document collection; my presence there was likely to affect the behaviour and attitude of the teachers and students. Therefore, I acknowledged that my data collection methods were inevitably subject to 'the subjective perception and biases of both participants and researcher' (Merriam 1998: 22).

In addition, reflexivity is a significant feature of social research (Delamont 2002; Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), which 'implies that the orientations of researchers will

be shaped by their socio-historical position, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 15). With a similar educational background to that of those being investigated, I was aware of my role and my interactions with the contexts throughout, in order to fight against familiarity (Delamont 2002: 31). This required me to distance myself from my original position and adopt an insider-out perspective, making it explicit in the process of data analysis and constructing texts when reporting. To enhance reliability and creditability in the research, detailed description of the case study contexts, and the process of interaction among the teachers and their students, observation and documentation were ensured, by, for example, establishing 'a chain of evidence' (Yin 2003).

3.5.2 Access

Blaxter et al. (2001: 154-5) identify three levels of access in planning and managing a research project dealing with human society, i.e. institutions (such as school or company), people at different locations (such as physical and virtual), and relevant documents and products. Access does not seem problem-free and the different levels are interrelated in that even when a researcher gains permission from gatekeepers to undertake a study in an institution, further attempts still need to be made to establish whether informed consent can be obtained from the individual teachers and students, or from a class. Seeking permission to access institutional or personal documents and artefacts is also problematic. Stake (2005: 459) compares qualitative researchers to 'guests in the private space of the world' and suggests that they should be well-mannered and strict in their application of ethical codes. Walford (1991: 6) contends that the real world the researchers work with is full of 'constraint and compromise'. Blaxter et al. (2001) observe that qualitative research projects are critically dependent on cooperation from the subjects of the investigation.

They (ibid.: 155) offer a list of practical strategies to increase the chance of gaining access and remedial plans if access is denied, including (see Table 3.3, page 98):

These strategies suggest that researchers should adopt a realistic approach to conducting fieldwork, with an awareness of the local context and a flexible manner. Researchers’ own awareness of the ethical issues should pervade the research process and products. Some of these strategies are contextualised in Chapter 4, fieldwork report.

| <i>Strategies to increase chances</i> | <i>Strategies to consider if access is refused</i> |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking advice on the appropriate negotiation of access; • Making effective use of existing contacts and networking; • Specifying reasons for doing the research; • Basing research work within the targeted institutions; • Making reasonable and polite requests; • Being reciprocal by offering some useful returns; • Planning time strategically and flexibly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaching alternative individuals and institutions; • Making attempts at different times; • Modifying research strategy in terms of techniques for data collection, research focus, alternative target groups; • Recoding the processing of undertaking research with regard to difficulties and possible implications for the research topic |

Table 3.3 Strategies for qualitative fieldwork (adapted from Blaxter et al. 2001)

3.5.3 Ethical considerations

Ethics are rules of proper conduct that conform to a set of principles (Reynolds 1979 in Robinson 2002: 65-6). To safeguard both participants and researchers in social and educational research, my research design complied with the requirements of the Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee (HPMEC 2006) of the Open University, the Economic and Social Research Council’s Framework for Research Ethics (2010), the British Educational Research Association (2004) and the British Association of Applied Linguistics (1994) regarding informed consent, confidentiality, protection, ownership of intellectual property, copyright and free speech (cf. Blaxter et al. 2001: 158, de Vaus 2001: 245), taking into account the complexities of online contexts (Mann and Stewart 2000).

Since my research design involved a survey and a multiple case study, a greater range of ethical issues arose than would with a single design. My research plans involved the observation of online activities, which made protecting the participants' identities and privacy more complex. Before undertaking fieldwork, the Informed Consent Letter was approved by the Open University's Ethics Committee. The main principles adopted were:

- that the participants were well informed about the project through a variety of media (Fowler 2002; Robson 2002) before they signed a consent letter and had the freedom to withdraw their consent at any point
- that privacy and confidentiality were respected (Fowler 2002; Dörnyei 2003) through anonymity or use of abbreviated names
- that 'probing of sensitive issues' (Stake 2005: 459) was avoided
- that electronic data was saved with password protection (Mann and Stewart 2000)
- that during and after participation in the research participants should experience no adverse consequences.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the philosophical paradigms that influenced my research design and the rationale for a multi-site and multi-stage approach, comprising a survey at the first stage and in-depth case studies at the second stage. I reviewed data collection instruments, and I considered the researcher's role. Finally, I outlined the practical issues concerning access and ethical considerations. In the next chapter I will flesh out the 'social dimension' (Walford 1991: 2) of the research, giving a 'semi-autobiographical reflexive account of the process of doing research', with a focus on the challenges that occurred in my fieldwork and the strategies I worked out, 'in the hope that others will benefit from this sharing of practical experience' (ibid.: 3).

Chapter 4 Fieldwork

*Dear all,
I started my visit to... Though not much progress has been made, I'm writing to you in order not to let the freezing weather and my cold (Again!) put off my flame...*

Extract 1: Email to supervisors on Tuesday (24/02/2009)

*Hi Liang,
Glad to know the flame of enthusiasm still burns, and that you are getting things done, despite the inevitable obstacles. Worth exploring ...*

*Hi Liang,
Sorry have not replied before. I have followed the emails of your trials and tribulations (lovely mental images of you sitting in a university study lounge trying to keep your flame alive while the rainy season does its worst outside the window!) ...*

Extract 2: Emails from supervisors on Tuesday and Wednesday (24-5/02/2009)

4.1 Overview

Extracts 1 and 2 are fragments of emails exchanged with my supervision team during the fieldwork. The content made it obvious that going into the field is never as easy as sightseeing. I described my experience as 'Faces, not Places'. The process of fieldwork was very lengthy and demanding. Things often happened unexpectedly and all I could do was to find ways of coping. As well as the negative natural conditions like bad weather and health problems that impeded efficient work, I experienced more challenges from human society. However I cherished those occasions when my patience and perseverance were rewarded by my becoming a temporary member of a chosen community for data collection.

Within seven months (from mid-September to the start of December 2008, and from mid-February to the beginning of June 2009) I visited 24 universities in total, across eight

provinces and municipalities located in the east, northeast and central parts of China.

Figure 4.1 presents a map of the fieldwork visits.



Figure 4.1 The route of my visits (red dots refer to the cities for the second visit)

4.2 Sampling participants

In Chapter 3, three sampling techniques, i.e. opportunity sampling, network sampling and purposive sampling, were considered suitable and realistic for the sample selection in my research design. In practice, it took considerable groundwork to identify the samples that met the criteria (Section 3.3.4). To do so, I used both ‘fieldwork’ and ‘deskwork’ (Blaxter et al. 2001). Firstly, by attending conferences in China prior to and during the fieldwork, I made contact with colleagues from a good many universities across China. Following this with a snowballing technique, I encouraged the networked respondents to help to extend

my reach to a wider community so that I could maximise opportunities. Secondly, through conducting a literature survey, I attempted to find similar cases that met my criteria and to get in touch with the authors. To complement this, an Internet search using the appropriate criteria yielded a list of relevant sources. Applying these methods was not a one-off effort but a continuous process throughout the survey.

Even with these methods, there was no sure way of knowing whether the selection would ensure the expected result. The opportunity and network sampling strategies relied heavily on the cooperation of respondents. It took time for them to read, disseminate and discuss my proposals. Often there were delays or even no responses, as the many academics I met at conferences had professional commitments and their lives were always busy. Reminder letters were sent to maximise the chances of capturing their attention. The purposive sampling was equally time-consuming and also not without problems. Literature searches depended on the availability and accessibility of suitable publications. As identified in Section 2.5, unlike the international journals such as *Language Learning and Technology*, *ReCALL* and *CALICO Journal*, there was a shortage of academic publications dedicated to language (culture) teaching with technology in China. Nor was there sufficient international publication by Chinese authors. Although I collected some published articles, I found that the projects reported had ended before publication and were not followed up. Internet searches could not guarantee that online information was always accurate and up-to-date. For example, although some institutions claimed to offer courses or programmes through ‘network’, in subsequent email communication I realised that the word ‘network’ was referred only to a courseware-based platform, without much relation to ‘Internet’ use. Overall, the selection process was accompanied by uncertainties and subject to constant revision and refinement.

As a result of my continued efforts, I managed to get in touch with a team of participants including language teachers (some of whom were academic heads), and both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Most of them only completed questionnaires and took part in interviews but a few of them worked as my informants for a much longer period, in frequent interactions and observations, mainly in the second round of fieldwork. It is worth pointing out that informants were not recruited at one fell swoop, but were approached through frequent communication with existing informants who recommended colleagues and classmates that they thought would be suitable contacts. In general, female informants outnumbered male informants, both among teachers and students. Chapter 5 will present the demographic data about the participants and their institutions.

4.3 Procedure

Due to the tight survey schedule for visiting some 20 universities from mid-September to the beginning of December 2008, I had to plan an average of about one week's time for each place (city). Email contacts had been made before I figured out a working schedule for conducting an initial broad survey. Some teachers acted as my respondents and informants directly while others served as 'brokers' to introduce me to colleagues who were considered relevant to the research.

As a standard procedure, Informed Consent Letters were delivered to teachers prior to questionnaire completion and interview on site. Before conducting an interview, briefings on interviewees' rights and obligations were offered, and routines clarified. The working language was decided by the interviewees. After interviewing, if there was a need for further investigation such as class observation and document collection, this was requested and appropriate arrangements were made. Once a class observation session was confirmed, letters were circulated to students with the informant teacher's help so that they were

briefed before my attendance. Through individual emails or class email accounts, my requests for student informant recruitment were explained and contact details offered so that students could contact me directly if they wished. Purposive selections of, and invitations to, student informants were also made (e.g. after a class, at an encounter in a library, etc.) as the fieldwork went along.

My second stage was informed by the first one, and it followed the same procedures as the survey stage. Eventually, four universities (U4, U14, U17 and U22) in three cities were confirmed for long-term fieldwork, with an average stay of five weeks. While in general they were visited in chronological order, visits to two of them (U14 and U17) overlapped to some degree, as a result of practical constraints such as time and informant teacher availability. Although U14 and U17 were in the same city, they were very distant from each other. I had to stay at U17 as my main site, which allowed me easier access to fieldwork than U14. When it came to observations on all sites, my purposes were made clear to the class: it was non-interventional in nature and only notes would be taken, without risking students' performance and progress. Detailed cases are presented in Chapter 6.

4.4 Challenges

Fieldwork is always full of uncertainties, unexpected changes and challenges (Ball 2002). Delamont (2002: 31) categorises five common impediments to good fieldwork, i.e. incomplete process, sexism and racism, going native, being bored, and reporting the familiar. These are very generic and can cover the whole process of fieldwork. Blaxter et al. (2001: 184) summarise some practical difficulties that qualitative researchers, especially novice researchers often encounter:

‘you cannot expect people to be as enthusiastic about, and committed to, your research as you are yourself. You may not be able readily to access all the documents that interest you. Not everyone will readily grant your requests for interviews. You may be denied access to some of the events or settings which you wish to observe. The response rate to your questionnaire survey may be disappointing.’

These real problems, which I encountered, seemed to have cast a pall over my fieldwork journey. There were occasions when I had to consider carefully a series of practicalities such as getting access to field sites and facilities, the gender issue of observing female students at their place of residence where they conducted online work, and being unable to complete the whole process due to time constraints. The main ones are summarised below.

4.4.1 Negotiation of entry to field sites

Negotiating entry to an educational setting normally involves passing through standard organizational procedures, i.e. asking the authorities for permission to be allocated to specific coordinators or teachers (Ball 2002: 34). In my case, while personal contacts were made prior to site visits, some contact teachers either did not have the authority to give permission for my visit or they suggested keeping the visit at a personal level, without reporting to and seeking consent from a higher authority. They warned that it might be problematic to get my application through the institutional hierarchy officially, which might delay, or even abort, the application. While I took this into consideration, I prepared an official document (Appendix A) from my university which endorsed my research plan and requested the relevant authorities to afford assistance in case of need. On most occasions, oral agreements were obtained without much trouble. There was only one exception when a university committee spent a long time discussing my visit proposal but

finally declined the request. However, despite my careful planning, there were unexpected short-notice changes, for various reasons, even after my arrival at an institution.

4.4.2 Limited access to institutional facilities

As a visiting researcher, I found it was difficult to get access to institutional services such as Internet use, photocopying, scanning, borrowing books, etc., despite my requests. In almost all the institutions I visited, I observed that many teachers had to share a desk or an office computer, making it difficult to allocate a workspace to a visitor. Furthermore, unlike many British institutions, which remain accessible at all hours during the day, Chinese institutions close during out-of-work hours such as lunch breaks, which resulted in disruption to my schedule for working on-site. It was equally difficult to find a quiet place on campus for recording interviews as there were no special quiet rooms allocated within institutions, nor was there a reservation system (except at one university), with even deans and professors having to share a room with their secretaries or colleagues in most cases. As a consequence, audio recordings were affected by noise from passers by, colleagues chatting and interrupting, and interviewees' in-coming phone calls. Classrooms in teaching buildings seemed never to be vacant, and open air locations like a lakeside round table or water pavilion were often occupied.

4.4.3 Limited access to classes and informants

Some teachers, although they were happy to grant an interview and to fill in a questionnaire, nonetheless either recognised that their class did not involve much use of Internet tools or denied my request to visit to the class in person. One real source of difficulty was that due to university expansion on a national scale, many city-centre universities have moved their main campus to a suburban area, a considerable distance

away. However, the teachers still live more centrally. This situation reinforces the already established convention that teachers do not have to work in the office if they do not have a teaching slot that day. In fact, almost all the informant teachers chose to stay only until the commuter buses left, as most campuses I visited were located in remote suburbs. Therefore, it was difficult for the teacher, the students and me to meet outside normal class time.

Without my frequently meeting the class face to face, students would be less conscious of my research purpose and presence, which would result in less personal engagement in my fieldwork. Even with those classes that I observed, not all students were interested in helping with my work. This was understandable as participation was voluntary but it did add to the difficulties experienced in pooling useful information from some institutions. It was also difficult to ask teachers to spend much of their own time with me on campus.

Interestingly, the majority of teachers I contacted were women, who would return home after class to look after their children and do housework, in addition to lesson preparation.

Another issue was gender related, as is not uncommon to fieldwork researchers. In Ball's (2002: 36) example, there was a mention of Scott (1974) and Porter (1984)'s difficulties in operating as young female researchers questioning older, professional men. Gurney (1991) also described her dilemma as a female researcher in a male-dominated setting; in my case it was just the reverse. I did not include gender as a variable for investigation, but I realised that most of the student volunteers were girls, especially in the case studies. As a male researcher, I experienced difficulty in negotiating access to women's accommodation areas (because in China, universities and colleges have segregated accommodation), where they found it most convenient to complete their after-class learning tasks. As Gurney (1991) notes, while the impact of gender on short-term research is relatively low, it has more impact on long-term research. As part of my research objective was to understand students' use of the Internet for language learning purposes after class, this obstacle to my

observation of their work conditions and practice prevented my obtaining a complete picture of their Internet-mediated learning activities.

4.4.4 Limited access to teaching materials

Obtaining documents, either at official or personal level, was also not without difficulties. For official documents like course outlines/plans, many teachers admitted that they maintained these for examination by senior staff members, rather than for actual use. On many occasions, the difficulty with borrowing a textbook from a teacher or a student was that both would leave after class and not show up again until the next session, a couple of days or even a week later. Both wanted to keep the textbook for preparation and revision work and it was inconvenient for me to borrow and return books, especially as the campuses were located a long way from my accommodation (e.g. more than one hour by commuting bus). This was particularly the problem in my first round of visits. In other cases, teachers claimed that it was institutional policy not to reveal materials outside the institution. Sometimes teachers agreed, but often forgot, to send copies of their documents such as PowerPoint slides, despite my reminders. Logging on to intranets to view course materials was inconvenient as this required user IDs and passwords.

4.5 Strategies

As qualitative research cannot be pre-programmed, it is a matter of ‘a practical activity requiring the exercise of judgement in context’ (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 23).

While it is not surprising to encounter difficulties in working with other people, what really matters is the readiness and flexibility to find solutions and alternatives.

Communicating openly with gatekeepers, teachers and students about the purpose of the research improves the chance of getting practical help. Clarifying the researcher’s identity

establishes openness and builds trust. Justifying the reasons for doing the research, showing enthusiasm and making reasonable requests for help can enhance the researcher's professionalism.

Difficulties in qualitative research vary considerably according to context, as do strategies for dealing with them. Common practices include sending reminder letters to respondents who have not replied by the initial deadline, approaching unwilling interviewees on a number of occasions, making oneself amenable to the librarian or custodian of the documents which one wishes to get access to, maintaining regular contacts with the key people, or gatekeepers, for his or her research, etc. (Blaxter et al. 2001: 185).

Faced with these challenges, I learned to be flexible and developed several strategies, appropriate to and informed by local contexts, in order to deal with difficulties.

4.5.1 The hour-glass strategy

For accessing field sites, I adopted an hour-glass strategy, i.e. top-down and bottom-up. I prepared an official letter from the Research School office endorsing my status and research purpose and carried it with me during my fieldwork trips. The letter, together with my cover letter for the research project (Appendix A), was presented when meeting an institutional head at the start of a visit; the head or other high-level teachers would then recommend some teachers for contact. On some occasions, I went for a bottom-up route through which the contact teacher recommended his/her colleagues to me directly. When the frontline teachers were willing to help, it became easier for senior administrators to approve. Overall, the bottom-up approach worked better than the top-down one in practice. Through the top-down approach, those teachers who had been nominated by their head

would feel compelled to receive my visit and, considering it as extra work, were therefore less forthcoming.

4.5.2 The outsider-in and insider-out strategy

This strategy was used to gain access to buildings like libraries which often housed a networked computer suite. To do so, I established relationships with two groups of people – students whose supervisors were my informants/brokers and staff who looked after the site. In the first round of visits, I asked the informant teachers or brokers to introduce one or two of their research students to me so that I could get their help on campus when necessary. I knew that they had a better knowledge of the campus facilities (e.g. which building had Internet-connected computers and could accept cash) than their teachers did. In my second round, at U17, for example, where I worked on campus for a relatively longer period, I succeeded in getting special permission to enter the building and use the wireless Internet connection. However, such a strategy did not work everywhere.

4.5.3 The ‘1+n’ strategy

In order to maximize contact with students for interviews, particularly in the second stage, I developed a kind of snowballing technique called ‘1+n’ strategy. Either before or after an interview, the student (i.e. the ‘1’) would be encouraged to bring along or to recommend one or more persons (i.e. the ‘n’) such as boy or girl friend, classmate or roommate, whom they thought suitable for this research work (e.g. regular Internet users). As a reward for their participation, after interviewing I often offered consultations about language learning or overseas study to the interviewees upon request. This practice proved welcome and brought about a word-of-mouth effect, encouraging more participants to volunteer. Doing this increased the quantity of data and improved the quality of each interview, as co-

interviewees often complemented each other and triggered more discussions than one alone would have done.

The gender issue dilemma was partly solved by persuading some female students to work as a group in a library so that I could observe (but this caused complaints from other students as there were no separate rooms with networked computers). As for working conditions in student accommodation, the best way of recording these was to ask female (and male) students themselves to take photos for me.

4.6 Reflection

Before starting to prepare for my fieldwork I was worried that my requests might be rejected (and indeed they were on some occasions), but I felt that people were generally ‘more cooperative about participating in the research than I anticipate[d]’ (Shaffir 1991: 72) so that I was able to visit and re-visit those institutions. Problematic as it was, my fieldwork was less common for research at a PhD level because it was large-scale. However, despite the inevitable impediments to the fieldwork, I believe that it was beneficial and rewarding to conduct such a research project, not only to myself as a novice researcher, but also to the informants and institutions that I worked with.

Through the survey I used first-hand data to build up a broad landscape view of the research area I proposed to explore. The subsequent in-depth case studies were better explored within the overall frame of the research setting. This was achieved through ethnographic practice at each site, for longer or shorter periods, regardless of the difficulties. The fieldwork experience thus acquired would pave the way for my future research career. It also became an informative and enriching experience for my informants and their institutions to have an opportunity for developing new perspectives and practices

through my feedback. Knowing that reciprocity is one of the key features of all human relationships (Adler and Adler 1991: 175), throughout my visits I kept in communication with teachers about my research and with students about my experience of language learning, or life overseas. On several occasions, as a means of academic exchange, I was invited by participant institutions to give presentations relevant to my research area and to discuss with staff the practical issues they encountered. The outcome was that, to use a Chinese saying, one plants the trees that others might enjoy the shelter and shade when the trees grow up.

In addition, before and during my fieldwork, I attended seminars and conferences that were relevant to my research theme. While presenting papers was not my priority, I managed a convincing self-presentation (Shaffir 1991) before a cohort of scholars and colleagues via personal communication and networking. This tactic paid off by helping me identify potential participants for my research purposes. The visit to U6 was a case in point. After presenting a paper at AILA 2008 in Essen, Germany I got to know a Chinese teacher from U6 who was a good ‘broker’. She enabled my visit to her institution and colleagues in the first round. This field site was interesting and worth exploring, but due to the key informant teacher’s absence on a visit to the United States, I had to give up a planned revisit in the second round. In another example, the fieldwork at U17 and U22 (see details in Chapter 6) in the second stage was the outcome of an annual conference on English language teaching in Shanghai at the end of the first round fieldwork.

To sum up, this fieldwork was rewarding as well as challenging. I have explored both the problems and my strategies for dealing with them. As no solution was perfect, I did what I could to maximise the benefit from the fieldwork, and I always reflected on my experience. The next two chapters present the data collected from the survey and case studies.

Chapter 5 The Survey

5.1 Overview

In Chapter 3, I argued that a survey approach, together with case studies, was an important part of the research design. The purpose of the survey study was to establish the current status and extent of the use of Internet technology in language teaching and learning in Chinese HEIs, particularly with reference to enhancing the goal of ICC development. In Chapter 4, the fieldwork experience was reported and reflected on. This chapter focuses on the data analysis from the survey, starting with a review of its benefits and constraints.

5.1.1 Benefits of the survey

The survey stage, from mid-September to the beginning of December 2008, proved fruitful but eventful. I gained valuable experience of on-site visits to 21 institutions and an overview of the Internet-mediated English language (and culture) teaching and learning that occurred in real-life situations, which could not have been revealed by straight deskwork. Also, through fieldwork, I was able to identify samples of potential interest for in-depth studies at the second stage of fieldwork. At the same time, I was successful in networking and maintaining rapport with a cohort of teachers, offering feedback and advice as appropriate. Moreover, the survey stage of fieldwork enriched my experience and greatly sharpened my communication and research skills. I learned to become flexible and reflexive, and to be more realistic in my expectations of others. These aspects of my survey experience have built up my confidence about conducting future research projects.

5.1.2 Constraints of the survey

Undertaking a survey in real life was very challenging because of the circumstances of questionnaire administration. On some occasions, questionnaires were administered in class time for the sake of the contact teacher's convenience but were completed hastily by the students. At other times, they were distributed by email but with a much lower response rate compared with face-to-face administration. Quite often, it was a mixture of both methods because of teacher preferences. In some institutions, students were keen to attend but individual interviews were almost impossible because they followed an established weekly schedule and I was there for only a short period of time. In other cases, few or no participants volunteered, despite reminders. It must be noted that these participants were a self-selecting sample, and were unrepresentative of Chinese HEIs as a whole. Possibly they were more committed to teaching and learning English language and culture via the Internet than those who received survey requests but did not respond. However, the survey design still served its main purpose of gauging general trends in the area investigated. There was no intention to run statistical analysis in order to arrive at inferential conclusions. Therefore, data sets obtained from questionnaires and interviews were only used for descriptive purposes. Field notes from observations were also used as a source of supplementary evidence.

The following sections will first present the research context mainly using questionnaire data, followed by descriptive analysis of the data sets from questionnaires, documents, observations and interviews. Some initial findings within thematic strands will be highlighted and potential cases identified as a result of sample selection.

5.2 Research context

Table 5.1 shows that 63 questionnaire responses from teachers (TQ) and 549 student responses (SQ) were received, identifying 29 Chinese HEIs from the east, northeast, north, mid-west, and central regions of mainland China. Altogether 24 institutions were visited. Another two were not approached, owing to a lack of teacher informants. Nevertheless, these drop-outs only accounted for a small number of the overall responses.

| TQ | InstCode | Frequency | Percentage | SQ | InstCode | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|-----------|-----------|------------|----|-----------|-----------|------------|
| | 2 | 1 | 1.6 | | <u>4</u> | 9 | 1.6 |
| | 3 | 7 | 11.1 | | <u>6</u> | 80 | 14.6 |
| | <u>4</u> | 11 | 17.5 | | <u>7</u> | 2 | 0.4 |
| | 5 | 6 | 9.5 | | 8 | 56 | 10.2 |
| | <u>6</u> | 4 | 6.3 | | <u>9</u> | 61 | 11.1 |
| | <u>7</u> | 3 | 4.8 | | 11 | 19 | 3.5 |
| | <u>9</u> | 6 | 9.5 | | <u>12</u> | 32 | 5.8 |
| | <u>12</u> | 1 | 1.6 | | <u>13</u> | 59 | 10.7 |
| | <u>13</u> | 2 | 3.2 | | <u>17</u> | 63 | 11.5 |
| | 16 | 1 | 1.6 | | 18 | 96 | 17.5 |
| | <u>17</u> | 1 | 1.6 | | 22 | 40 | 7.3 |
| | 21 | 2 | 3.2 | | 26 | 8 | 1.5 |
| | 24 | 10 | 15.9 | | 27 | 1 | 0.2 |
| | 25 | 1 | 1.6 | | 28 | 1 | 0.2 |
| | | | | | 29 | 1 | 0.2 |
| | Total | 56 | 88.9 | | Total | 528 | 96.2 |
| | Missing | 7 | 11.1 | | Missing | 21 | 3.8 |
| | Total | 63 | 100 | | Total | 549 | 100 |

Table 5.1 Institutional representations from TQ and SQ

It can be seen that only in some institutions did both teachers and students complete the questionnaires (underlined institution codes – labelled ‘InstCode’), due to the voluntary nature of participation. Another reason for non-completion was the failure of some participants to input data in the personal information section of the questionnaires.

The teachers surveyed ($n = 63$, missing = 2) had a career length from a few months to 25 years, with 20% having up to five years’ teaching experience, 25% with 5-10 years’ experience, 17.6% between ten years and 15 years, 23.9% in the 15-20 years’ group, and the remaining 11.2% more than 20 years. Their experience in using the Internet in daily

life ranged from four years to 15 years, with 23.8% between four and seven years, and 58.8% between seven and ten years. Putting both figures together, the percentage of those with four to ten years of Internet experience (82.6%) was five times higher than those with 10-15 years' Internet experience (14.4%). With regard to using the Internet for teaching purposes, except for two respondents who indicated no experience at all, 47.7% noted that they had between a few months' and four years' experience, another 39.7% had between four and eight years, and the remaining 6.4% had up to 12 years' experience. Notably, the majority of the respondents, represented by the 47.7% and the 39.7% groups together, had less than eight years' Internet-mediated teaching experience, which seemed consistent with the general phenomenon that promoting teaching with computer/Internet technologies was a recent endeavour in China (see Section 1.3.3). In addition, compared with the teachers' daily experience of Internet use noted above, the much shorter Internet-mediated teaching experience suggests that the daily use of the Internet did not necessarily influence teachers to apply it in their teaching.

When asked about their experience of receiving training in the use of the Internet for teaching purposes, teachers provided an approximately equal number of positive and negative answers ($n = 63$, missing = 3). Among those who answered 'yes' ($n = 30$), 16 reported the training as 'one-off', 14 as 'ongoing'. Similarly, in answering whether they ($n = 61$, missing = 2) had used an online platform for pedagogical activities, 31 teachers replied negatively while 28 reported 'yes'. While it is unclear whether the pedagogical use of the Internet was encouraged by training, the approximately equal proportions seem to suggest that the provision of training and self-training influenced the development of Internet-mediated teaching. Although the questionnaire did not ask what kind of online platforms they used for teaching, from the interviews it became clear that most teachers adopted a convenience approach, installing purchased e-learning platforms.

Among the students (n = 549, missing = 21), 57% of them were categorised as English majors (e.g. English literature, English education, etc.) and the rest were grouped into non-English majors, covering a range of arts, medical, science and engineering disciplines. The remaining 3.8% were unidentified. 353 students reported their experience of using the Internet, ranging from 'zero' (5.9%) to a maximum of 12 years. Among them, 31.7% had experienced using the Internet for less than four years and 40% had used it for between four and six years. Nearly one fifth (18.7%) had an experience of between six and nine years while a marginal 4% had used it for over ten years. 483 students responded to the question about the average amount of time they spent on the Internet every day, revealing that 68.3% spent between one and three hours on average, while the percentages fell sharply from 13.5% (3-6 hours) to 2% (6-9 hours) and 1% (9-12 hours) respectively as time spent online grew. By contrast, only 15.1% of them spent less than one hour online each day on average, including four students who indicated having no time for Internet use at all. This, compared with teachers' responses, suggests that the students did not seem to have as much time as the teachers' to access the Internet. Also the time spent online may not have involved focusing on learning purposes. This result seems consistent with Wang and Coleman's (2009) findings. Two main reasons for this were cited: the heavy workload and the additional costs. The former can be evidenced from students' comments:

'I don't surf the Internet everyday. On the weekends, I may spend 2-3 hours on the Internet. I seldom surf the Internet on weekday[s].'

U6-SQ-LHJ

'I don't have enough time to surf on the Internet from Monday to Friday, on Saturday or Sunday, one or two hours a day.'

U6-SQ-ZL

Admittedly, both students were from the same university, hence may not reflect the situation elsewhere, but in interviews, many other students mentioned that they were indeed very busy. Regarding the costs of using the Internet service provided by institutions, students in the 23 HEIs have to pay fees in order to get Internet access. U22 (the international partnership type) was the exception because the students' tuition fees covered the cost of Internet use. An additional reason is that some universities (e.g. U2, U3 and U9 etc.) barred Year-1 students from using computers or laptops in student residences, hoping to prevent addiction to computer games, a policy which may have inhibited the pedagogical application of Internet technologies especially for independent learning.

Unlike their teachers, the students ($n = 549$, missing = 27) generally lacked training in using Internet technologies for learning purposes. As many as 75.1% of the students ($n = 522$) in the survey reported not having received training, almost three times more than those who answered 'yes'. Among the affirmative answers ($n = 130$), 63.8% of respondents reported that the training was 'one-off', the rest of the respondents reporting 'ongoing' training. This shows that institutional training provision was inadequate. In fact, during interviews and informal talks (e.g. U2, U3, U4, U6, U9 and U17 etc.), both students and teachers revealed that foreign language departments or language centres for non-English majors generally did not offer technological training. Students frequently needed to register for an optional 'information literacy' course provided by the computing department or the library, to learn to use digital resources. Occasionally, a language teacher with knowledge of computer/Internet skills would give students 'just-in-time' training, for example, CHS from U17 (Section 6.6).

When asked if the class had a website or an online platform for their teaching and learning activities, 39% of the students ($n = 549$, missing = 44) confirmed that they did, whereas 53% responded negatively. This result seems to conform to the teachers' answers discussed above, although the percentages differ slightly. The fact that over half of the teachers and students reported not having a website for pedagogical activities at their disposal implies that the availability of Internet-mediated teaching and learning remained arbitrary.

5.3 Analysis

5.3.1 Data from questionnaire survey

This section looks at data from both teachers' and students' questionnaires (Appendix B). Owing to a scarcity of existing questionnaires related to my research, I adapted the templates in a previous survey study (Wang and Coleman 2009) and developed them based on the current literature. The teacher questionnaire was piloted with the help of Chinese visiting teachers in the UK. They also helped read the student version, since quasi-sample groups of students were unavailable. Responses showed that teachers overall thought the content of the questionnaire appropriate, except for the mention of tools such as Second Life and wikis, which are unfamiliar to Chinese colleagues. They agreed that Chinese translation would facilitate questionnaire completion.

The first section (Questions 1-5) of both questionnaires asked about teachers' and students' views of Internet use in teaching and learning, using a 4-point Likert Scale from 'Strongly disagree (1)' to 'Strongly agree (4)'. In Question 1, general views about in-class Internet use were explored.

| Teachers' views (TQ1) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|--------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Essential | 6.3 | 11.1 | 39.7 | 42.9 | 82.6 | 3.19 | 100 |
| Same importance | 1.6 | 39.7 | 34.9 | 23.8 | 58.7 | 2.81 | 100 |
| Complementary | - | 6.3 | 42.9 | 49.2 | 92.1 | 3.38 | 100 (1) |
| More interesting | 1.6 | 15.9 | 36.5 | 44.4 | 80.9 | 3.21 | 100 (1) |
| More time-consuming | 6.3 | 36.5 | 47.6 | 9.5 | 57.1 | 2.60 | 100 |
| More rewarding | 1.6 | 33.3 | 36.5 | 25.4 | 61.9 | 2.79 | 100 (2) |
| Less manageable | 6.3 | 34.9 | 42.9 | 15.9 | 58.8 | 2.68 | 100 |
| Less practical | 15.9 | 58.7 | 22.2 | 3.2 | 25.4 | 2.13 | 100 |
| Great flexibility | - | 4.8 | 50.8 | 44.4 | 95.2 | 3.40 | 100 |
| More active learning | - | 9.5 | 33.3 | 57.1 | 90.4 | 3.48 | 100 |
| Improve learner autonomy | 1.6 | 7.9 | 44.4 | 46.0 | 90.4 | 3.35 | 100 |
| Distracting | 22.2 | 60.3 | 15.9 | 1.6 | 27.5 | 1.97 | 100 |
| Students' views (SQ1) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Essential | 2.4 | 17.5 | 57.9 | 21.7 | 79.6 | 2.98 | 100 (3) |
| Same importance | 4.4 | 41.2 | 42.6 | 11.3 | 53.9 | 2.60 | 100 (3) |
| Complementary | 1.1 | 13.5 | 49.0 | 35.5 | 84.5 | 3.17 | 100 (5) |
| More interesting | 2.7 | 9.5 | 48.1 | 39.3 | 87.4 | 3.24 | 100 (2) |
| More time-consuming | 10.7 | 52.5 | 29.7 | 6.7 | 36.4 | 2.32 | 100 (2) |
| More rewarding | 4.2 | 35.5 | 47.4 | 12.2 | 59.6 | 2.66 | 100 (4) |
| Less manageable | 6.0 | 42.6 | 39.9 | 11.1 | 51.0 | 2.55 | 100 (2) |
| Less practical | 18.6 | 61.2 | 15.5 | 4.2 | 19.7 | 2.04 | 100 (3) |
| Great flexibility | 1.8 | 3.5 | 56.1 | 37.9 | 94.0 | 3.29 | 100 (4) |
| More active learning | 2.4 | 20.9 | 48.5 | 27.9 | 76.4 | 3.01 | 100 (2) |
| Improve learner autonomy | 4.2 | 21.5 | 48.5 | 25.7 | 74.2 | 2.95 | 100 (1) |
| Distracting | 13.8 | 54.8 | 25.1 | 5.6 | 30.7 | 2.21 | 100 (3) |

Table 5.2 Overall views on Internet use in language classes

Table 5.2 shows that most teachers and students believed that using the Internet in the language class allowed them greater flexibility (95.2% in TQ and 94% in SQ respectively) than textbook-based work. While most of the teachers and students agreed that the Internet was an essential element in and complementary to textbook-based language teaching, more than half in both groups (58.7% in TQ and 53.9% in SQ) agreed that the use of the Internet in language classes was as important as textbook-based teaching. The teachers and the students also felt that using the Internet in the language class should be more interesting and rewarding, yet was less manageable and practical, though the percentages differed slightly. However, neither group thought that using the Internet would distract from

textbook-based teaching. This result was consistent with the results in the ‘complementary’ category in Table 5.2 and suggests that textbook-based teaching is still firmly embedded in the teaching of English language in China (Wang and Coleman 2009). There are also some disparities between the teachers and the students. While 58.7% of the teachers considered it time-consuming to use Internet technologies in language teaching, only 36.4% of the students worried about this. However, many teachers had high expectations that using the Internet would help to develop learner autonomy and foster more active learning (both 90.4%). Although most of the students also had relatively high expectations in those respects, the percentages were significantly lower (76.4% and 74.2% respectively).

Table 5.3 explores the perceptions of usefulness of the Internet for English language teaching and learning. Clearly both teachers and students attached great importance to the ability to access cultural knowledge (100% and 93.7% respectively) with the Internet. What the teachers emphasised in terms of cultural knowledge was the understanding of the target culture (93.7%), much more than raising the awareness of learners’ home culture (65.1%). The students had the same tendency but both percentages (71.4% and 46.6% respectively) were considerably lower than those of the teachers. The teachers’ and the students’ percentages were discrepant, the first two percentages (93.7 % and 71.4%) being more discrepant than the following two (65.1 % and 46.6%). These discrepancies seem to suggest that the teachers were more divided than their students about introducing the target culture and the home culture in language classes. This trend also applies to their views that Internet-mediation would enable real language use and foster communication skills – the teachers’ expectation (both 88.9%) was again higher than the students’ (both 68.5%). It indicates that the teachers were generally more enthusiastic about the application of Internet tools in language programmes. It also reveals that both teachers and students prefer using Internet tools, whether information or communication oriented, for accessing

the target cultures, i.e. people and published media, rather than balancing this with learning about their home culture. One commonality is that neither the teachers nor the students seemed aware of the potential conflicts caused by Internet-mediated intercultural exchanges with their target partners through communication tools, although the teachers (25.4%) were more cautious than the students (16.1%).

| Teachers' perception (TQ2) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Language proficiency | - | 7.9 | 63.5 | 27.0 | 90.5 | 3.14 | 100 (1) |
| Real language use | - | 9.5 | 52.4 | 36.5 | 88.9 | 3.22 | 100 (1) |
| Cultural knowledge | - | - | 47.6 | 52.4 | 100.0 | 3.52 | 100 |
| Communication skills | 1.6 | 7.9 | 63.5 | 25.4 | 88.9 | 3.10 | 100 (1) |
| Awareness of the home culture | 1.6 | 33.3 | 52.4 | 12.7 | 65.1 | 2.76 | 100 |
| Understanding of the target culture | - | 6.3 | 55.6 | 38.1 | 93.7 | 3.32 | 100 |
| Conflicts in cultural exchanges | 15.9 | 58.7 | 22.2 | 3.2 | 25.4 | 2.13 | 100 |
| Students' perception (SQ2) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Language proficiency | 1.1 | 20.2 | 64.3 | 12.9 | 77.2 | 2.86 | 100 (8) |
| Real language use | 2.2 | 27.7 | 53.9 | 14.6 | 68.5 | 2.78 | 100 (9) |
| Cultural knowledge | 0.7 | 4.6 | 60.7 | 33.0 | 93.7 | 3.24 | 100 (6) |
| Communication skills | 2.0 | 28.2 | 54.8 | 13.7 | 68.5 | 2.78 | 100 (7) |
| Awareness of the home culture | 3.8 | 47.5 | 39.5 | 7.1 | 46.6 | 2.46 | 100 (11) |
| Understanding of the target culture | 2.2 | 24.4 | 55.2 | 16.2 | 71.4 | 2.82 | 100 (11) |
| Conflicts in cultural exchanges | 16.6 | 65.2 | 13.5 | 2.6 | 16.1 | 1.98 | 100 (12) |

Table 5.3 Perceptions of usefulness of the Internet for language teaching and learning

Regarding the perceived impact of the Internet use on the language class, Table 5.4 shows that both teachers (100%) and students (95.9%) agreed that making use of the Internet would bring them more up-to-date materials than the textbooks did. Both parties also perceived opportunities for obtaining authentic materials (96.8% in TQ and 88.1% in SQ) from, and conducting authentic communication (96.8% in TQ and 83.9 in SQ) with the target culture, although the student percentages were slightly lower than the teachers'. However, while 87.3% of the teachers were positive about developing students' reflective

thinking by using the Internet, only 58.5% of the students agreed. 57.1% of the teachers thought involving the Internet would increase uncertainty in organising teaching and learning activities but only one out of five considered that this would create anxiety in the language class. By contrast, less than half of the students (48.7%) agreed with the possible increase in uncertainty in teaching and learning but their percentage of perceived increased anxiety (26.9%) was higher than the teachers'. This comparison between the teachers' and the students' uncertainty and anxiety levels indicates that the former were more concerned about organisational and managerial issues whereas the latter were more worried about dealing with the learning process.

| Teachers' perception (TQ3) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|----------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Up-to-date | - | - | 25.4 | 74.6 | 100.0 | 3.75 | 100 |
| Authentic materials | - | 3.2 | 33.3 | 63.5 | 96.8 | 3.60 | 100 |
| Authentic communication | 1.6 | 1.6 | 60.3 | 36.5 | 96.8 | 3.32 | 100 |
| Reflective thinking | 1.6 | 11.1 | 68.3 | 19.0 | 87.3 | 3.05 | 100 |
| Uncertainty in teaching | 11.1 | 31.7 | 46.0 | 11.1 | 57.1 | 2.57 | 100 |
| Anxiety in teaching | 17.5 | 61.9 | 19.0 | 1.6 | 20.6 | 2.05 | 100 |
| Students' perception (SQ3) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Up-to-date | 1.8 | 1.6 | 46.4 | 49.5 | 95.9 | 3.43 | 100 (3) |
| Authentic materials | 0.9 | 10.0 | 59.9 | 28.2 | 88.1 | 3.15 | 100 (5) |
| Authentic communication | 0.5 | 14.6 | 53.7 | 30.2 | 83.9 | 3.12 | 100 (5) |
| Reflective thinking | 2.0 | 38.4 | 49.2 | 9.3 | 58.5 | 2.72 | 100 (5) |
| Uncertainty in learning | 5.8 | 44.4 | 41.2 | 7.5 | 48.7 | 2.49 | 100 (6) |
| Anxiety in learning | 12.0 | 59.6 | 22.2 | 4.7 | 26.9 | 2.18 | 100 (8) |

Table 5.4 The impact of Internet use on the language class

Table 5.5 shows teachers' roles in using the Internet for language teaching and learning. An overwhelming majority of the teachers and students believed that the teachers should play an important role in helping the students, from sourcing materials (linguistic and cultural) to facilitating (organising and instructing) intercultural exchange. 82.5% of the teachers also considered it important to collaborate effectively with their partner teachers

in order to maintain good intercultural communication. Similarly, 87.3% of the teachers considered it important to examine their students’ learning outcomes through Internet-mediated learning. Three out of four students (75.4%) agreed that their learning products could be displayed online. While the percentage of those who felt that teachers should help with online networking (e.g. introducing students to an established forum or community) was higher among the teachers (84.1%) than the students (78.3%), the latter (84.7%) expected that the former (66.6%) could offer more technical support.

| Teachers’ perception (TQ4) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|---|---------------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Language materials for Ss | 1.6 | 3.2 | 34.9 | 60.3 | 95.2 | 3.54 | 100 |
| Cultural knowledge for Ss | 1.6 | 3.2 | 36.5 | 58.7 | 95.2 | 3.52 | 100 |
| Organise intercultural exchange | 1.6 | 12.7 | 55.6 | 30.2 | 85.8 | 3.14 | 100 |
| Support intercultural communication | 1.6 | 12.7 | 60.3 | 25.4 | 85.7 | 3.10 | 100 |
| Examine Ss’ learning outcomes | 1.6 | 11.1 | 77.8 | 9.5 | 87.3 | 2.95 | 100 |
| Help with socialising | 3.2 | 12.7 | 60.3 | 23.8 | 84.1 | 3.05 | 100 |
| Technical support | 6.3 | 27.0 | 46.0 | 20.6 | 66.6 | 2.81 | 100 |
| Collaborate with partner | 7.9 | 9.5 | 63.5 | 19.0 | 82.5 | 2.94 | 100 |
| Students’ perception (SQ4) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Language materials for Ss | 0.9 | 5.8 | 57.7 | 34.8 | 92.5 | 3.26 | 100 (4) |
| Cultural knowledge for Ss | 1.3 | 2.6 | 57.4 | 37.9 | 95.3 | 3.31 | 100 (5) |
| Instructions for intercultural exchange | 1.3 | 6.9 | 61.0 | 30.1 | 90.1 | 3.19 | 100 (4) |
| Display Ss’ learning outcomes | 1.8 | 21.7 | 60.1 | 15.3 | 75.4 | 2.87 | 100 (6) |
| Help with socialising | 2.0 | 18.4 | 61.7 | 16.6 | 78.3 | 2.91 | 100 (2) |
| Technical support | 1.5 | 12.0 | 62.7 | 22.0 | 84.7 | 3.03 | 100 (10) |

Table 5.5 Teachers’ roles in using the Internet for language teaching and learning

Students’ perception of their own roles in Internet-mediated language learning is shown in Table 5.6. The percentages of students agreeing that it was their responsibility to engage in online searching for language and culture materials (94.3% and 94.7%) were even higher

than those showing their teachers’ expectation (87.3% and 93.7%). Students also had higher expectations of undertaking intercultural exchange under instruction (88.5%) and displaying learning outcomes such as essays and reports (88.9%) than did teachers (both 80.9%). While the students’ expectation of socialising with partners from the target culture (83.9%) was close to the teachers’ (82.6%), they had a much lower interest in online communication with their own classmates (68.6%) than the teachers expected (82.5%). This difference points to a gap between the students’ expectations and the reality – there is always a shortage of ‘native English speakers’ in class, whether face-to-face or online, for authentic communication. In addition, compared with the 81% of the teachers who thought that it was important for the students to be skilled in Internet use, only 66.1% of the students believed that they should be skilled in using the Internet.

| Teachers’ perception (TQ5) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Ss search language materials | 1.6 | 11.1 | 46.0 | 41.3 | 87.3 | 3.27 | 100 |
| Ss search cultural materials | 1.6 | 4.8 | 52.4 | 41.3 | 93.7 | 3.33 | 100 |
| Intercultural exchange (instructed) | 3.2 | 15.9 | 60.3 | 20.6 | 80.9 | 2.98 | 100 |
| Intra-class communication | 3.2 | 14.3 | 58.7 | 23.8 | 82.5 | 3.03 | 100 |
| Socialising with target group | 4.8 | 12.7 | 52.4 | 30.2 | 82.6 | 3.08 | 100 |
| Ss display learning outcomes | 4.8 | 14.3 | 60.3 | 20.6 | 80.9 | 2.97 | 100 |
| Skilled in Internet use | 3.2 | 15.9 | 54.0 | 27.0 | 81.0 | 3.05 | 100 |
| Students’ perception (SQ5) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Ss search language materials | 0.7 | 3.8 | 60.1 | 34.2 | 94.3 | 3.26 | 100 (6) |
| Ss search cultural materials | 0.7 | 3.5 | 58.5 | 36.2 | 94.7 | 3.29 | 100 (6) |
| Intercultural exchange (instructed) | 1.1 | 9.3 | 60.1 | 28.4 | 88.5 | 3.14 | 100 (6) |
| Intra-class communication | 1.1 | 29.1 | 55.7 | 12.9 | 68.6 | 2.79 | 100 (6) |
| Socialising with target group | 1.5 | 13.7 | 62.8 | 21.1 | 83.9 | 3.09 | 100 (4) |
| Ss display learning outcomes | 1.1 | 8.7 | 67.8 | 21.1 | 88.9 | 3.11 | 100 (7) |
| Skilled in Internet use | 3.1 | 29.7 | 51.5 | 14.6 | 66.1 | 2.76 | 100 (6) |

Table 5.6 Students’ roles in using the Internet for language teaching and learning

The second part of the questionnaires looks at the teachers' and students' practices in using Internet tools and doing Internet-mediated activities, inside and outside the classroom. A 4-point Likert Scale was applied from 'Never Applicable (1)' to 'Always Applicable (4)'.

Table 5.7 displays preferred ways of applying Internet tools in language activity design. According to the teachers, the Internet was predominantly used as a resource bank for knowledge about the target culture (85.7%) and they encouraged their students for the same purpose (81%). This was followed by teachers' searching for information about the home culture (77.8%). However, encouraging the students to seek knowledge online about their home culture was less popular (66.7%), scoring the same as using the Internet as a tool for accessing language knowledge and skills training. In addition, 73% of the teachers responded that they used the Internet as a tool for communicating with the students and 58.7% of the teachers organised their students to communicate with a partner class from the target culture, while a mere 52.4% organised cross-site communication with a partner class from the home culture. Three out of five teachers used the Internet as a platform to display their students' learning outcomes. The predominant practice in the students' use of the Internet was to search for information (89.1%) for linguistic or cultural knowledge. Concerning students' experiences of communication activities, over half of them used the Internet to communicate with their classmates (54.1%) and partner class from the home culture (53.9%) whereas only 35.8% of them had ever had experience of communicating with partner classes from the target culture. Another 38.2% of them were content to display their learning outcomes. These percentages do not match the teachers' accounts above. One of the possible reasons was that some teachers might have reported previous experiences which did not involve their current students.

| Teachers' practices (TQ6) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|---|-------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Linguistic knowledge | 15.9 | 17.5 | 25.4 | 41.3 | 66.7 | 2.92 | 100 |
| Language skills training | 15.9 | 17.5 | 41.3 | 25.4 | 66.7 | 2.76 | 100 |
| Target culture knowledge | 12.7 | 1.6 | 36.5 | 49.2 | 85.7 | 3.22 | 100 |
| Home culture knowledge | 12.7 | 9.5 | 41.3 | 36.5 | 77.8 | 3.02 | 100 |
| Communicate with class | 14.3 | 12.7 | 52.4 | 20.6 | 73.0 | 2.79 | 100 |
| Ss explore target culture | 12.7 | 6.3 | 38.1 | 42.9 | 81.0 | 3.11 | 100 |
| Ss explore home culture | 12.7 | 20.6 | 41.3 | 25.4 | 66.7 | 2.79 | 100 |
| Inter-class communication | 25.4 | 15.9 | 36.5 | 22.2 | 58.7 | 2.56 | 100 |
| Intra-class communication | 23.8 | 23.8 | 41.3 | 11.1 | 52.4 | 2.40 | 100 |
| Display learning outcomes | 17.5 | 22.2 | 44.4 | 15.9 | 60.3 | 2.59 | 100 |
| Students' practices (SQ6) | Agreement (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Search information | 1.3 | 3.5 | 56.3 | 32.8 | 89.1 | 3.09 | 100 (34) |
| Intra-class communication | 4.6 | 34.8 | 45.9 | 8.2 | 54.1 | 2.45 | 100 (36) |
| Intercultural exchange with partner class | 9.5 | 47.5 | 31.1 | 4.7 | 35.8 | 2.17 | 100 (39) |
| Inter-class communication | 5.3 | 33.9 | 46.4 | 7.5 | 53.9 | 2.46 | 100 (37) |
| Display learning outcomes | 7.8 | 46.8 | 32.6 | 5.6 | 38.2 | 2.22 | 100 (39) |

Table 5.7 Options for using Internet tools for activity design

Putting those specific activities together, Table 5.8 summarises the design of Internet activities in class. A majority of the teachers (57.1%) used individual tools for activity design while the percentages of those using learning platforms with or without a partner class were considerably lower (36.5% and 38% respectively). This result may suggest that existing platforms for online teaching and learning were not widely used and that teachers preferred to make flexible use of different tools afforded by the Internet.

| Teachers' practices (TQ7) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|---------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Individual tools | 25.4 | 12.7 | 44.4 | 12.7 | 57.1 | 2.35 | 100 (3) |
| Platform with a partner class | 33.3 | 20.6 | 30.2 | 6.3 | 36.5 | 1.90 | 100 (6) |
| Platform without a partner class | 25.4 | 27.0 | 31.7 | 6.3 | 38.0 | 2.00 | 100 (6) |

Table 5.8 Design of Internet activities in class

In terms of the individual tools used for language classes, the teachers and the students were asked to identify a range of tools that they used and to indicate the frequency of their use of each, as Table 5.9 shows.

| Teachers' practices (TQ8) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|------------------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Browsers and search engines | 12.7 | 3.2 | 31.7 | 52.4 | 84.1 | 3.24 | 100 |
| Reference tools | 12.7 | 3.2 | 36.5 | 47.6 | 84.1 | 3.19 | 100 |
| Text-based web page | 15.9 | 7.9 | 50.8 | 25.4 | 76.2 | 2.86 | 100 |
| Audio materials | 12.7 | 11.1 | 49.2 | 23.8 | 73.0 | 2.78 | 100 (2) |
| Video materials | 22.2 | 22.2 | 30.2 | 17.5 | 47.7 | 2.27 | 100 (5) |
| Email | 12.7 | - | 34.9 | 52.4 | 87.3 | 3.27 | 100 |
| e-forum | 27.0 | 11.1 | 33.3 | 27.0 | 60.3 | 2.57 | 100 (1) |
| Blog | 30.2 | 23.8 | 28.6 | 15.9 | 44.5 | 2.27 | 100 (1) |
| Chat-room | 33.3 | 17.5 | 25.4 | 23.8 | 49.2 | 2.40 | 100 |
| Instant messenger | 28.6 | 17.5 | 28.6 | 23.5 | 52.1 | 2.44 | 100 (1) |
| Videoconferencing | 44.4 | 15.9 | 31.7 | 6.3 | 38.0 | 1.97 | 100 (1) |
| Wiki | 46.0 | 22.2 | 19.0 | 3.2 | 22.2 | 1.60 | 100 (6) |
| Students' practices (SQ7) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Browsers and search engines | 2.0 | 3.1 | 39.9 | 47.2 | 87.1 | 3.17 | 100 (43) |
| Reference tools | 2.2 | 11.7 | 45.5 | 33.5 | 79.0 | 2.96 | 100 (39) |
| Text-based web page | 1.5 | 5.5 | 49.4 | 36.6 | 86.0 | 3.07 | 100 (39) |
| Audio materials | 1.1 | 2.7 | 48.5 | 40.6 | 89.1 | 3.15 | 100 (39) |
| Video materials | 1.3 | 2.2 | 49.7 | 39.9 | 89.6 | 3.15 | 100 (38) |
| Email | 1.6 | 7.7 | 50.3 | 33.7 | 84.0 | 3.03 | 100 (37) |
| e-forum | 3.8 | 29.5 | 41.0 | 18.8 | 59.8 | 2.61 | 100 (38) |
| Blog | 7.1 | 28.1 | 39.0 | 18.0 | 57.0 | 2.58 | 100 (42) |
| Chat-room | 6.7 | 34.6 | 34.1 | 17.7 | 51.8 | 2.49 | 100 (38) |
| Instant messenger | 7.3 | 23.3 | 37.2 | 24.8 | 62.0 | 2.64 | 100 (41) |
| Videoconferencing | 25.3 | 54.1 | 9.3 | 2.4 | 11.7 | 1.71 | 100 (49) |
| Wiki | 22.6 | 51.9 | 11.7 | 4.7 | 16.4 | 1.80 | 100 (50) |

Table 5.9 Experiences of using Internet tools in language classes

A comparison of the rankings from both teachers and students reveals the similarities and differences. Email was most frequently used by the teachers (87.3%), followed by browsers and search engines, and reference tools (both 84.1%). While reporting similar levels of Internet use for emailing, browsing and searching, the students reported lower use of reference tools such as online dictionaries. As regards accessing online language

learning materials, the teachers reported making less use of text-based (76.2%) and audio (73%) resources, compared with the students (86% and 89.1% respectively). There was a sharp contrast between teachers and students in the use of video resources. While only 47.7% of the teachers used video materials almost 90% of the students reported doing so. With reference to communication and networking tools, both sides reported similar levels of use of e-forums (60.3% in TQ and 59.8% in SQ), but they differed in many other uses. For example, the teachers were less active in using blogs (44.5%), chat-rooms (49.2%) and instant messengers (52.1%) than the students (57%, 51.8% and 62% correspondingly). By contrast, the teachers were more frequent users of videoconferencing (38%) and wikis (22.2%) than the students (11.7% and 16.4% respectively).

Table 5.10 explores the use of commonly available information and communication tools for engaging in learning activities. In addition to the activities in class (SQ8), the students were also asked about what they did with these tools in their self-study time (SQ9). As was found in Table 5.9, both the teachers and the students attached importance to activities using information tools, particularly, searching and browsing (TQ9: 85.7%, SQ8: 74.2%, SQ9: 83.4%), and accessing audio-visual resources (TQ10: 84.2%, SQ9: 77.2%, SQ10: 82.7%). In contrast to the figures in Table 5.9, only 60.3% of the teachers reported encouraging their students to use online reference tools for lexical activities, which echoed the students' answers (55.6% in class and 66.5% outside class).

Both parties confirmed engaging relatively frequently in communication-oriented activities like writing emails to partners (TQ9: 57.1%, SQ8: 47.9%, SQ9: 51.6%) and using web pages or blogs for sharing ideas (TQ9: 49.2%, SQ8: 45.7%, SQ9: 51.9%). Half of the teachers (50.7%) reported using intra-class forums, in contrast to the students' report (37.6% in SQ8 and 39.8% in SQ9). In the meantime, both the teachers (38.1%) and the

students (32.4% and 32.2%) indicated a much lower usage of forum discussion with partners from the target culture. In contrast, synchronous chat seemed more welcoming.

| Teachers' practices (TQ9) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|---|-------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|----------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Reference tools for lexical learning | 19.0 | 19.0 | 38.1 | 22.2 | 60.3 | 2.60 | 100 (1) |
| Browse and search information on topics | 11.1 | 1.6 | 47.6 | 38.1 | 85.7 | 3.10 | 100 (1) |
| Audio-visual materials | 11.1 | 3.2 | 41.3 | 42.9 | 84.2 | 3.13 | 100 (1) |
| Write emails to partners | 25.4 | 14.3 | 31.7 | 25.4 | 57.1 | 2.51 | 100 (2) |
| Intra-class forum discussion | 25.4 | 17.5 | 31.7 | 19.0 | 50.7 | 2.32 | 100 (4) |
| Inter-class forum discussion | 39.7 | 15.9 | 27.0 | 11.1 | 38.1 | 1.97 | 100 (4) |
| Chat with partners | 31.7 | 19.0 | 31.7 | 11.1 | 42.8 | 2.10 | 100 (4) |
| Videoconferencing with partners | 42.9 | 23.8 | 22.2 | 4.8 | 27.0 | 1.76 | 100 (4) |
| Web page or blog for sharing ideas | 27.0 | 17.5 | 39.7 | 9.5 | 49.2 | 2.19 | 100 (4) |
| Networking | 41.3 | 28.6 | 17.5 | 4.8 | 22.3 | 1.70 | 100 (5) |
| Students' practices (SQ8) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Reference tools for lexical learning | 7.3 | 26.4 | 42.1 | 13.5 | 55.6 | 2.41 | 100 (59) |
| Browse and search information on topics | 3.5 | 12.0 | 52.5 | 21.7 | 74.2 | 2.73 | 100 (57) |
| Audio-visual materials | 3.3 | 9.7 | 53.9 | 23.3 | 77.2 | 2.78 | 100 (54) |
| Write emails to partners | 4.9 | 36.6 | 36.6 | 11.3 | 47.9 | 2.34 | 100 (58) |
| Intra-class forum discussion | 8.4 | 43.9 | 31.0 | 6.6 | 37.6 | 2.16 | 100 (56) |
| Inter-class forum discussion | 9.5 | 47.5 | 26.4 | 6.0 | 32.4 | 2.08 | 100 (58) |
| Chat with partners | 7.8 | 28.1 | 40.3 | 12.9 | 53.2 | 2.37 | 100 (60) |
| Videoconferencing with partners | 16.8 | 51.0 | 17.5 | 3.8 | 21.3 | 1.87 | 100 (60) |
| Web page or blog for sharing ideas | 9.3 | 34.2 | 37.0 | 8.7 | 45.7 | 2.24 | 100 (59) |
| Networking | 14.6 | 43.9 | 23.7 | 6.7 | 30.4 | 2.01 | 100 (61) |
| Students' practices (SQ9) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Reference tools for lexical learning | 2.7 | 21.7 | 47.2 | 19.3 | 66.5 | 2.65 | 100 (50) |
| Browse and search information on topics | 1.5 | 6.7 | 52.8 | 30.6 | 83.4 | 2.96 | 100 (46) |
| Audio-visual materials | 1.1 | 7.5 | 54.1 | 28.6 | 82.7 | 2.93 | 100 (48) |
| Write emails to partners | 4.9 | 33.9 | 41.2 | 10.4 | 51.6 | 2.38 | 100 (53) |
| Intra-class forum discussion | 8.0 | 42.8 | 33.2 | 6.6 | 39.8 | 2.20 | 100 (52) |
| Inter-class forum discussion | 8.9 | 49.5 | 26.0 | 6.2 | 32.2 | 2.11 | 100 (51) |
| Chat with partners | 7.3 | 29.5 | 40.6 | 13.1 | 53.7 | 2.41 | 100 (52) |
| Videoconference with partners | 18.4 | 50.6 | 17.7 | 3.5 | 21.2 | 1.88 | 100 (53) |
| Web page or blog for sharing ideas | 10.0 | 29.0 | 42.8 | 9.1 | 51.9 | 2.33 | 100 (50) |
| Networking | 14.8 | 44.8 | 23.5 | 6.9 | 30.4 | 2.03 | 100 (55) |

Table 5.10 Internet-mediated activities in and after class

In Table 5.10, under half of the teachers (42.8%) engaged the students in using this tool to communicate with partner classes, compared with students' higher levels (53.2% in SQ8 and 53.7% in SQ9). This contrast shows that the teachers and the students had different practices in using asynchronous and synchronous communication tools. However, only 27% of the teachers and even lower percentages of the students (21.3% and 21.2%) confirmed their use of videoconferencing. Conversely, the percentages for networking were higher on the students' side (both 30.4% in SQ8 and 9) than on the teachers' (22.3%). The levels of students' use of Internet tools did not differ greatly according to whether they were engaging in in-class or out-of-class activities.

| Teachers' difficulties (TQ10) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=63) (Missing) |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|------|------|------|-------|------|-------------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Funding | 28.6 | 17.5 | 28.6 | 22.2 | 50.8 | 2.38 | 100 (2) |
| Network access | 20.6 | 22.2 | 31.7 | 22.2 | 53.9 | 2.49 | 100 (2) |
| Time in class | 12.7 | 17.5 | 42.9 | 23.8 | 66.7 | 2.71 | 100 (2) |
| Time outside class | 15.9 | 23.8 | 36.5 | 20.6 | 57.1 | 2.54 | 100 (2) |
| Technical support | 19.0 | 19.0 | 38.1 | 20.6 | 58.7 | 2.56 | 100 (2) |
| Pedagogical experience | 17.5 | 19.0 | 46.0 | 12.7 | 58.7 | 2.44 | 100 (3) |
| Partners' participation | 12.7 | 27.0 | 41.3 | 15.9 | 57.2 | 2.54 | 100 (2) |
| Experience in collaboration | 19.0 | 20.6 | 42.9 | 14.3 | 57.2 | 2.46 | 100 (2) |
| Students' difficulties (SQ10) | Applicability (%) | | | | 3 + 4 | Mean | Total (n=549) (Missing) |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | | |
| Teachers' instruction | 4.4 | 25.0 | 49.0 | 13.1 | 62.1 | 2.54 | 100 (47) |
| Network access | 10.9 | 37.9 | 29.3 | 13.5 | 42.8 | 2.29 | 100 (46) |
| Time in class | 5.3 | 28.2 | 43.5 | 13.8 | 57.3 | 2.48 | 100 (50) |
| Time outside class | 7.1 | 33.3 | 37.7 | 12.8 | 50.5 | 2.38 | 100 (50) |
| Technical support | 5.1 | 20.2 | 47.7 | 18.0 | 65.7 | 2.61 | 100 (50) |
| Partners' participation | 5.3 | 31.1 | 43.5 | 10.9 | 54.4 | 2.42 | 100 (50) |
| Experience in collaboration | 3.3 | 15.8 | 50.5 | 22.0 | 72.5 | 2.75 | 100 (46) |

Table 5.11 Main barriers to using the Internet for teaching and learning

Table 5.11 investigates the main barriers that language classes might come across in developing and implementing activities. The perspectives of teachers and students differed

considerably. Whereas the former ranked lacking time in class (66.7%) as the most significant barrier and the lack of funding (50.8%) as the least significant, the latter identified the fact that they had not had experience of online collaboration (72.5%) as their most significant barrier and the lack of network access (42.8%) as the problem least applicable to them. In fact, the teachers considered some barriers as almost equally serious, such as lacking time outside class (57.1%), technical support and pedagogical experience (both 58.7%), and partners' participation and collaboration experience (both 57.2%). Network access, according to students' responses, was less significant than other barriers, although it was still considered an obstacle towards undertaking activities based on Internet technologies. Students considered that lack of technical support was the second biggest barrier (65.7%), followed by insufficient instruction from teachers (62.1%), time in class (57.3%), partners' participation (54.4%) and time outside class (50.5%).

This result from the students' responses seems inconsistent with a previous survey (Wang 2007; also Wang and Coleman 2010) which suggested that the lack of time both in and outside class was more serious. A student respondent's additional account echoed the teachers' accounts of the lack of time in class, as below:

'We don't have enough time to be educated on the Internet. In the class, only when our teachers require us to search the information on the Internet, will I do it. In conclusion, the Internet education doesn't come in our education truly.'

U6-SQ-ZL

Therefore, it can be argued that while the issue of time matters in designing Internet-mediated activities, other obstacles may have become more challenging as time elapses and institutional contexts change.

In conclusion, the questionnaire data show that teachers and students commonly used the Internet in their daily life and for pedagogical purposes. The teachers had more opportunities for computer/Internet-use training than the students and those who undertook this training were more likely to apply computer/Internet-mediated activity design in teaching, to varying degrees. Both the teachers and the students showed positive attitudes towards adopting the computer/Internet although their practice varied considerably, from quite common unplanned use of individual Internet tools to setting up integrated online platforms. In these contexts, both information tools and communication tools were widely used, although the former were more frequently used. In teaching, the same trend applied: both the teachers and the students used information tools (for searching, referencing, sourcing, etc.) more heavily than communication tools. The main purposes of using the Internet tools were to access language and cultural materials (textual, audio, video and graphic) from the target culture, while communicating with target-culture partners remained a high expectation but an infrequent reality. The function of online platforms was to deliver messages and display learning outcomes, more than to discuss and socialise. The main barriers cited in teachers' and students' responses did not match closely.

The following sections focus on the disparity between what was reported, both for institutions and individuals, and the reality, as evidenced by two brief cases.

5.3.2 Data from documents

As explained earlier, lack of time prevented me from conducting a detailed survey of Internet-mediated learning activity in each institution on the list. Hence document collection became opportunistic. Some documents were obtained from teachers, others were from institutional websites. The messages conveyed by the documents were

categorised according to the national guidelines for English language education for both English majors and College English students, as well as for English majors in the distance education sector.

5.3.2.1 The English major education strand

Table 5.12 presents all the available documents relating to English major education from the universities investigated. Despite the shared goal of developing sound language proficiency, the documents interpret the ICC goal in the national guideline (MoE 2008) with somewhat different descriptors. However they have a common cognitive perspective, indicating that their aim was to convey knowledge about or understanding of ‘society and culture of English-speaking countries’, i.e. ‘cultural’ or ‘socio-cultural’ knowledge. Occasionally, cultural knowledge explicitly included both the target cultures and the home culture (such as in U6 and U12). In the other ICC domains, only in the U13 document was there a note of developing students’ social etiquette in behavioural terms, while the course in U14 specifically announced its aim as developing empathy for other cultures in the ICC affective component. Although ICC was mentioned in some documents, it was often used together with other notions such as (inter-)cultural awareness and critical thinking. This use of these terminologies reflects the inconsistent adoption of a framework or a model for what ICC should actually entail and how it should be achieved (Zhang 2007; Song 2008). A comparison of these documents also shows that the current cultural pedagogies in these institutions were predominantly cognitive-based, with an emphasis on teaching about socio-cultural knowledge of English-speaking countries.

In U2, while no programme document was obtained, a discipline-based self-evaluation document (U2-Doc-Evaluation) from the Foreign Languages School revealed that language teaching was institutionally recognised as ‘an integration of language and

culture', emphasising the systematic and holistic view of language knowledge and socio-cultural knowledge. It was believed that this socio-cultural perspective would enhance students' understanding and mastery of the language through learning and using it in their real-life contexts. In specific courses such as intensive or extensive reading, this perspective entailed that:

'every teaching unit or text should be the basis of socio-cultural or life-related knowledge study; the students should learn to interpret, with the teacher's help, the cultural and social phenomena that are unfolded in the text and to further explore relevant knowledge based on that. It is through that exploration process that the students will learn about the associated socio-cultural knowledge more systematically and acquire an understanding of contextualised language knowledge.'

U2-DOC/Evaluation (my translation)

With regard to pedagogical transformation, this document put forward 'The Greater Classroom' (ibid.) concept, which proposed that the teaching and learning process should go beyond the conventional classroom interaction. On the one hand, it argued that teachers should gradually move away from the micro learning process in order to allow their students to obtain independent learning experience and knowledge. On the other hand, it suggested that teachers should not limit themselves to merely teaching in the classroom, but rather act as mediators throughout the whole teaching and learning process, supervising and guiding students to learn effectively. Such a 'Greater Classroom' should include the educational environment and extracurricular activities.

| Uni. | Document Type | ICC Goal Descriptions | Relevant Courses | Technological Specifics |
|------|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| U2 | Self-evaluation report (section) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand the integration of language and culture; • The Greater Classroom | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive Reading, Extensive Reading, etc. (unspecified) | Unavailable |
| U6 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have sound language proficiency; • to have knowledge about English-speaking countries’; • to introduce Chinese culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills-based courses; • Literature courses; • Society and culture in English-speaking countries; • Chinese Culture; Intercultural Communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application of computer technology as a core course |
| U9 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have high quality; versatile students with the knowledge of English language; • to have an understanding of society and culture of English-speaking countries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills-based courses; • Business-oriented courses; • Literature courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional scores for passing computer proficiency tests |
| U11 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have sound language proficiency; • to be rich in English language and cultural knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills-based courses; • Literature courses (poetry, essays, novels, etc.) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic knowledge of using computer and the Internet; • Self-access centre |

| | | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| U12 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have sound language skills • to develop students' intercultural awareness, ICC • to learn about China and the target countries' society and culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills-based courses; • Literature courses; • Society and culture in English-speaking countries; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic skills of modern information technology • Band-1 certificate of computer literacy (provincial-level) required |
| U13 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have sound language skills • to have cultural knowledge, ICC, cultural literacy, cultural awareness, social etiquettes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills-based courses; • Literature courses; • Intercultural communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certificate of computer literacy (provincial-level) required |
| U14 | Course introduction (Master level) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to understand films and media in their cultural contexts • to develop empathy for other cultures • to practise critical thinking | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural analysis of film | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online discussion using Google Sites required • No Internet connection in the classroom |
| U18 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have sound language skills • to have broad socio-cultural knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language skills-based courses; • Culture-based courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational technology centre for developing learning resources and self-study support |

Table 5.12 An overview of the institutional documents for English major education relevant to ICC goal and technological requirements

In line with the aims of ICC, the courses provided by these institutions centred on a typical cluster of language skills, i.e. listening, reading, speaking, writing, and translation/interpretation. Culture-focused courses were treated differently, either as one of the core components, in some institutions, or as an additional optional component.

Generically, two types of culture-focused courses were published, Society and Culture in English-Speaking Countries and Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication. Although there was a lack of detailed information about the courses, it is reasonable to assume that the former was socio-cultural knowledge-based whereas the latter introduced theoretical frameworks and concepts of intercultural communication, as well as case studies. It is noteworthy that among the list of institutions, only the School of English Studies in U6 made it explicit that the course on Chinese culture was a key element of the programme.

Although specific ICT (information and communication technology) courses were absent from the U2 document, other institutions stressed this requirement to varying degrees.

While in the U6 document the application of computer and Internet technologies was seen as an essential course, some institutions (e.g. U11 and U13) required students to obtain a certificate of computer proficiency. The U9 document presented it as an additional component. By taking computer proficiency tests students would earn credits for graduation. The other institutions only asked for mastery of basic ICT knowledge and skills. Only two documents (U11 and U18) described technology-supported learning centres in detail. In fact investment in technology supported learning was common to all institutions, and had been established in response to the nationwide trend towards the use of advanced information technology in higher education (MoE 2000, 2004; Dai 2008; Wang 2008). However, none of the institutional documents recorded how computer/Internet training would be provided to students, nor were teachers required to adopt network technologies in the classroom.

5.3.2.2 The College English education strand

The strand of College English education has a greater focus on the trend towards digital literacy than the ICC goal, although both have been included in the national guidelines for College English programmes (MoE 2004). Table 5.13 summarises the documents obtained from the universities under scrutiny.

According to the available documents, ‘reform in teaching and learning’ was officially claimed by all the institutions, in response to the nationwide reform of College English education. The first aspect of the reform was to shift from reading-focused language skills training to an all-round development of the skills, attaching special importance to listening and speaking, under the influence of the communicative language teaching approach. With regard to the cultural component, it was often interpreted generically as ‘integrative culture literacy’ (U1, U9, U13 and U18), lacking specific descriptions. For example, the scheme for College English reform in U1 stated that its target was to:

‘change the previously reading-based, listening and speaking-attached goal to the one that is listening and speaking-based, with integrative ability to use the English language. The aim of such a shift is to enable students to communicate, both verbally and in writing, more effectively in their work and social life. A further aim is to enhance learner autonomy and students’ integrative cultural literacy, so as to meet the needs of social development and international communication.’

U1-DOC/CE-RfmSchm (my translation)

Similarly, the programme syllabus for College English education in U9 also claimed that its goal was to:

‘develop students’ strong abilities in listening, speaking, reading, translation, and integrative cultural literacy; to help students to lay a sound language foundation [...] so that they are enabled to communicate in English for information, and to adapt themselves to the needs of social and economic development.’

U9-DOC/CE-Slbs (my translation)

These interpretations vary little because College English education policies and reforms in local institutions should, in principle, conform to the central administration’s guidelines. It is clear from the goals summarised in Table 5.13 that the ability to use languages in real situations was prioritised. Although none of the documents stated explicitly that students should pass CET-4 or 6, the nation-wide language proficiency tests, as a prerequisite to graduation, this policy was implied clearly from each document citing their successful pass rates at CET-4/6 over the past years. This was further evidenced by an appraisal of the College English education reform by an expert team external to U1, which endorsed the institutional policy and practice of linking students’ graduation certificates and degree awards to their CET-4/6 results (U1-DOC/Newsletter).

The goal of developing students’ integrative cultural literacy, which was interpreted variously according to local institutional priorities, was clearly subordinate to language proficiency. For some, integrative cultural literacy was identified as a broad aim, without specific objectives (U9); for others, it equated to a supply of cultural knowledge (e.g. U11). Accordingly, the main set course books, the *College English* series were language-focused, with a small fraction of added-on cultural notes (as demonstrated in Section 6.3).

| Uni. | Document Type | ICC Goal Descriptions | Relevant Courses | Technological Specifics |
|------|--|---|---|---|
| U1 | Institutional leaflet, newsletter (No. 25), programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to have integrative language ability and use • to have integrative cultural literacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College English series | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online teaching platform • Online learning centre • A minimum of 2-hours online self-study per student per week • Regular online tutorials |
| U3 | Course syllabus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to cultivate students' intercultural awareness and ICC • to learn about intercultural communication theories and concepts systematically • to know about mainstream cultural phenomena from English countries, and to observe, analyse, compare and contrast, and comment on cultures and differences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Intercultural Communication for College English</i> (quality course) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course website containing all course materials from textual to audio-visual • Course-based Bulletin Board System available, password-protected • Regular online tutorials |
| U4 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to promote communicative competence • to adopt a functional-cultural perspective | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College English series; • Western civilisation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online platform (courseware-based) for self-study |

| | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| U9 | Programme syllabus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to have integrative language ability and use ● to have integrative cultural literacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College English series; ● Culture-focused series (only at higher grades) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online platform (courseware-based) for self-study |
| U11 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to have integrative language ability and use, esp. speaking ● to supply cultural knowledge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College English series; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Language learning centre for self-study ● Online speaking-listening |
| U12 | Programme introduction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to develop students' ICC ● to be competent in international communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College English series; ● Culture-focused series: <i>Intercultural Communication and The Global Villagers Have to Know</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College English Online website, including web pages of Foreign Language Club and Writing Club for activity information and display ● Quality course website |
| U18 | Programme syllabus | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● to have sound language knowledge and skills ● to have comprehensive ability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● College English series; ● Culture-based series (senior-level only): <i>The Origin of Western Cultures, Introduction to US Culture, Intercultural Communication</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Educational technology centre for developing learning resources; ● Online platform (courseware-based) for self-study |

Table 5.13 An overview of the institutional documents for College English education relevant to ICC goal and technological requirements

The second aspect of the reform relates to College English course development. Different to the traditional domination of language skills training, the new national guidelines (MoE 2004) ask for extra modules such as culture-focused courses such as *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication* in order to enhance students' all-round development. For instance, in U3, a specific course document was obtained from its website because the course, *Intercultural Communication for College English*, was accredited as a provincial-level JPKC course (see Sections 1.3.3 and 4.2). Instructed bilingually and promoting learner autonomy, the course had three components: theories of intercultural communication, language ability and ICC development. Hence, the course aims were to develop students' intercultural awareness and ICC, enrich students' knowledge about humanities, broaden global perspectives and enhance all-round quality education as its hierarchical target with several sub-goals:

- to cultivate students' sensitivity to cultural differences through learning about intercultural communication theories
- to enhance students' ability to think both in Chinese and in English, and to switch between languages according to the changing contexts
- to enable students to develop bicultural awareness and to mediate effectively between the two cultures in real-life situations
- to broaden cultural perspectives.

U3-DOC/IC-Slbs (my translation)

However, such goals were specific to the culture-focused courses only; in the *College English* series, i.e. the language skills-focused courses, these goals were marginally represented. Text books were often structured identically (Figure 5.1), focusing on vocabulary and grammar exercises, and text analysis. Text A was the main focus for study, while Text B was supplementary.

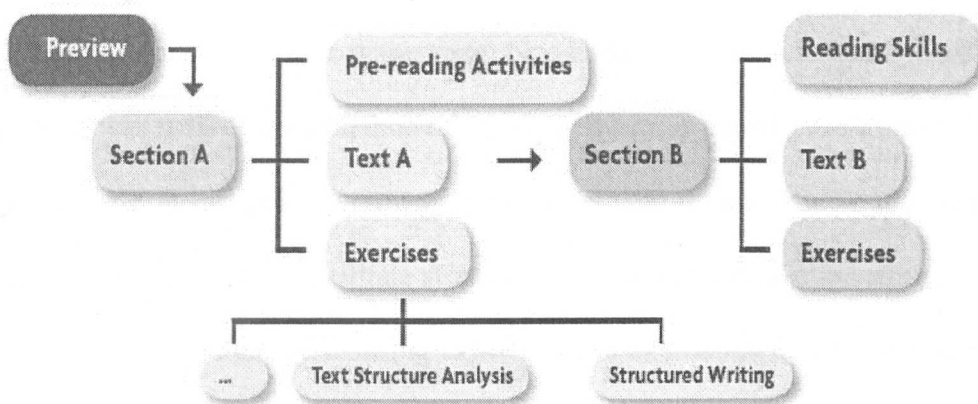


Figure 5.1 The structure of a unit in *New Horizon College English* (from <http://www.tydfjz.com/read.php?tid=233986>)

This flow chart is representative of the range of course books which neither attend to the cultural aspect of language teaching and learning, nor recommend the use of Internet technologies for locating resources, or communication (see also Section 6.3). However, the newer versions of the series (e.g. NSCE) since 2008, including online materials, have responded to promoting ICC elements.

The third reform lies in the change of teaching and delivery method, from the face-to-face instruction mode to one that integrates classroom teaching, computer technology and activity design. Figure 5.2 illustrates this new mode.

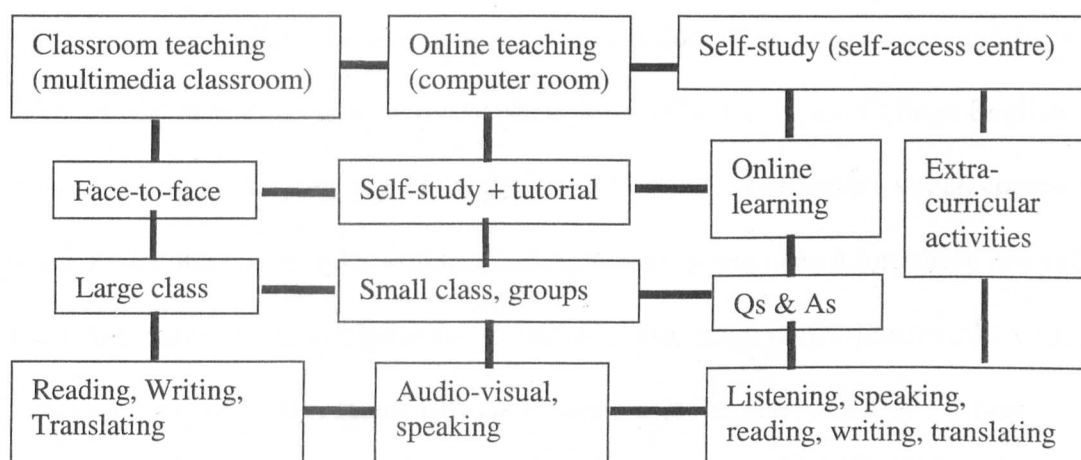


Figure 5.2 The new teaching mode (U1-DOC/CE-RfmSchm, my translation)

The new mode lays great stress on the use of computers and network-based course platforms, in addition to the mainstream face-to-face instruction. While large class teaching was still the core method of course delivery, especially for training in reading, writing and translating skills, it was common for courseware-based online teaching platforms to be set up to facilitate students' in-class and out-of-class study, in a way which was labelled 'autonomous learning'. However, an examination of the method showed that students were often required to attend for a fixed period of time (often 2 hours a week), go to predetermined places (e.g. self-access centres), do the exercises set by the courseware and submit their answers in order to get scores as evidence of learning. This pre-programmed learning process seems no different to self-study in the classroom, but without the teacher's physical presence. Further, some institutions (e.g. U1 and U3) made it mandatory that while students attended online learning, whether self-study or autonomous learning, teachers were officially scheduled by the institutions to take turns in providing online support such as answering questions or giving tutorials upon request. On such occasions, students' online learning brought course credits, while teachers' online workloads were taken into their payroll calculations.

In response to the national guidelines on the transformation of assessment, all the institutions ensured that the assessment scheme included both summative and formative methods, the latter having been overlooked previously. In U1, the College English Education School devised a '1+4+5' plan (U1-DOC/CE-RfmSchm), which comprised a summative component (10% oral test and 50% written test) and a formative one (40%). The latter included sub-components of students' self-study performance (20%), in-class performance (8%), assignments (6%) and extracurricular activities (6%). At the other end of the spectrum, in the case of U9, although the assessment scheme covered both components (e.g. written tests, students' self-evaluation, teachers' evaluation, records of

online and offline study, interviews and portfolios), the formative component only accounted for 20-30% of the total. This difference between institutions indicates that at local level, national guidelines and policies were differently interpreted, reflecting pedagogical practice and preferences in new technology use.

In addition to a commonly-used courseware-based online platform the School of Foreign Studies in U12 had hosted an online website dedicated to College English extracurricular activities such as the Foreign Language Club and the Writing Club (U12-DOC/OnlIntro). The bilingual website recruited student volunteers and invited experienced teachers to maintain content input and update. Such a practice, although not formalised or included in the assessment scheme, provided a flexible alternative learning space that motivated the students to use the target language in a real-life context (e.g. through online publication). See Section 5.3.3 for selected screenshots.

5.3.2.3 The strand of distance education for English majors

In this last strand, the distance education type, a document on the *Cross-cultural Communication* course reform was obtained from U21, a provincial-level open university. According to the document, the course was one of the core modules for Year-2 English majors in open learning, with the main goals of cultivating students' intercultural competence and raising their awareness of intercultural misunderstandings. The course was delivered through the open learning system, i.e. a password-protected website.

In the document, it was recognised that communication in the target language was an effective way of enhancing language learning, and conducive to understanding the knowledge and skills associated with intercultural communication, as well as proficiency in writing. Students were encouraged to complete all the assessment components in

English, although they could choose to submit learning records and reflective essays in Chinese. As regards all discussions within the class, it was requested that the sessions should be moderated by student representatives in turn and the class members should give their own opinions and respond to each other, preferably in English. For synchronous discussion, each student should input no less than 150 words in total during each discussion session (no less than 1 hour) while for the asynchronous one, students could adopt a flexible timetable to join in discussions with no less than 100 words each time. Scores would be given for both forms of discussion with reference to discussion content, language form, and word length. Students were allowed to use external synchronous tools, such as MSN Messenger and QQ, for communication with each other, as long as the topics were relevant and records were submitted afterwards. There was no indication, however, that discussions in any form could take place with external persons, particularly those from other cultural backgrounds.

Clearly, in a distance education mode much more importance was attached to online communication in order to maintain content delivery and discussion, which could be done face-to-face in physical class settings. There was no mention of using information tools for accessing external materials, which indicated either that the course materials (printed and online) were judged to be sufficient, or that it was assumed that students would do this without instructions. While there was a lack of communication with partners from the target culture, discussions among the class members were encouraged. The assessment scheme included a formative and a summative component, both accessible via two online sub-platforms. In contrast to the assessment weighting adopted by most conventional universities, in distance learning the formative component outweighed the summative, with a ratio of 6:4.

5.3.3 Data from observations

Only a few class observations were undertaken, owing to tight schedules and limited access. Photos of classrooms were taken, or downloaded from institutions' websites, with verbal permission. Online learning environments of the targeted institutions were browsed, but access was restricted owing to password protection of internal websites and forums.

5.3.3.1 Observations of physical settings

In general, the institutions visited were all equipped with facilities that had been established in response to the national curricular reform. Old-fashioned language labs had been replaced by multimedia and computer classrooms which were Internet-connected (Figure 5.3). Computer classrooms provided machines for the whole class but student computers could be controlled by the teacher's operating panel. Multimedia ones had one computer for teachers only and students either had monitors or a single large screen.



Figure 5.3 Computer and multimedia classroom layouts (clockwise from top left: U1, U10, U13 and U17)

Another typical setting was a lecture room or an auditorium with only one computer, which was used to accommodate large classes, usually for an optional course that was attended by students from several classes, as Figure 5.4 shows.



Figure 5.4 A lecture room in U14

For safety and security reasons these rooms, except for lecture rooms, were only accessible at scheduled times. In some cases students were allowed to use the computer and multimedia rooms with special permission outside class time, but it was more usual for them to use computer rooms on campus to go online.

5.3.3.2 Observations of online learning environments

In addition to the physical settings, these institutions all had official websites to present their virtual institutional profiles. The priority, as Huang et al. (2007) note, was for administration and service provision. As a matter of course, institutional web pages provided links to online resources (such as online dictionaries) for language learning purposes and self-study purposes. Campus-based Bulletin Board Systems (e.g. U1) were on the whole very popular among students for information exchange and socialising, although not necessarily for language learning and communication in the target language. Some institutional websites hosted spaces for online English corners or clubs (e.g. U12), as a notice board for disseminating messages and publicising events. Figure 5.5 exemplifies

institutional web pages containing online resources and Figure 5.6 presents web pages showing an online discussion forum and English club events from different universities.

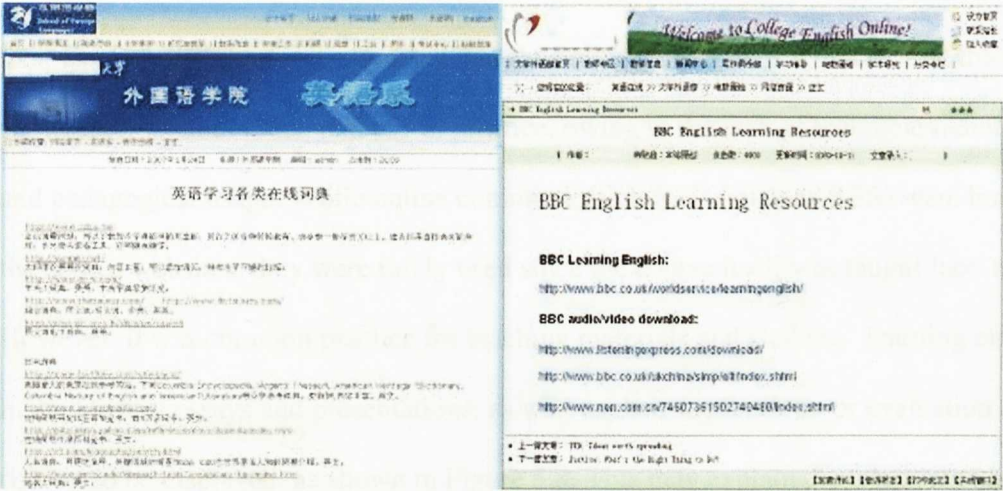


Figure 5.5 Institutional web pages providing learning resources (U9 and U12)

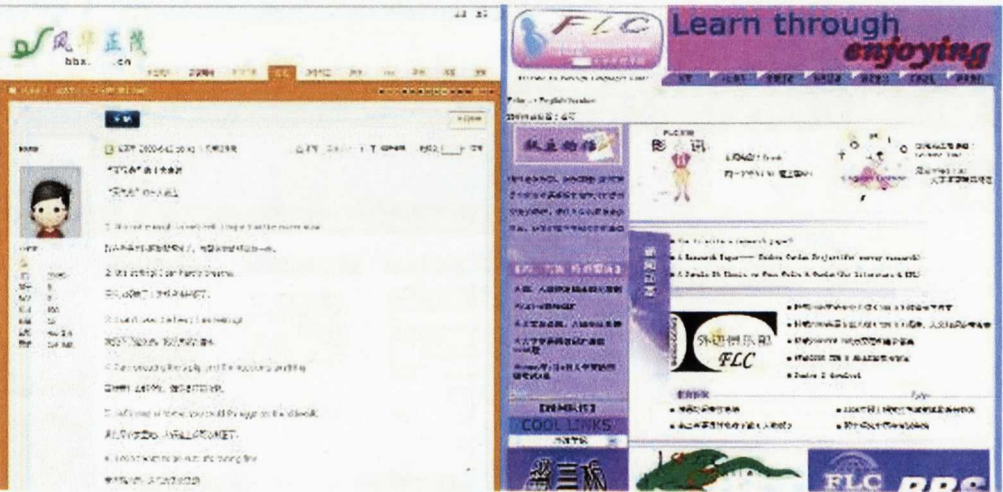


Figure 5.6 A campus BBS (U1) and a campus learning club homepage (U12)

Specific web pages displaying particular course teaching and learning agendas, or course web links, were not conspicuous on the homepages or menus, suggesting that course information was primarily shared internally. On other sites, logging on to the Intranet might allow access to online courses. For example, the School of English Studies in U6 purchased the Blackboard system for institution-wide use in online teaching. Such platforms required subscription for use, except for one particular type of course, i.e. JPKC

(quality course), which was often showcased on institutional websites. Figure 5.7 displays two screenshots of JPKC course websites based in U3 and U13 respectively. Enquiries with some teachers (e.g. ZLJ in U3, RR in U13 and HCH in U18) who were involved in their English JPKC projects revealed that the online sites were not much more than showcases, without much real use in practice, owing to the lack of technical maintenance and pedagogical usage. While online communication tools (such as BBS) were built into the course websites, they were rarely used since the course itself was taught face-to-face. However, it was common practice for teaching materials and students' learning outcomes in the form of essays and presentations, as well as their feedback on or evaluation of the course, to be displayed, as shown in Figure 5.8. This may explain the relatively high percentages of teachers who reported using the Internet for such purposes in their questionnaires (see TQ5 and TQ6 in Tables 5.6 and 5.7 in Section 5.3.1).



Figure 5.7 Homepages of Intercultural Communication courses in U3 and U13

ultimately their citizens.

b. Sociological view of globalization

The sociological view of globalization defines it as a more pervasive force throughout the world. That is, globalization occurs when the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede as people around the world become increasingly aware that they are receding.

c. Marxist philosophy on globalization

A more critical view of globalization, based on Marxist philosophy, argues that globalization is what people in the Third World have already experienced for several centuries. It is called colonization.

Proponents of this school of thought maintain that capitalist western countries exploit raw materials and cheap labor found in the Third World countries at the enormous expense of the peoples of the Third World countries.

社会学

前进

殖民化

帝国主义

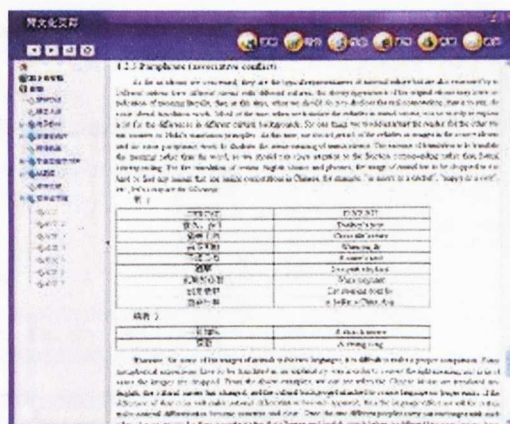


Figure 5.8 An e-book section (U3) and a student essay display (U13)

Similarly, the *Cross-cultural Communication* course run by the open universities had a web-supported learning platform, which also provided learning materials from texts to video clips. Based on the textbook content, the online website provided more materials for supplementary study and special links to online tutorial and discussion forums which were all re-directed to the Open Universities' online platform. Figure 5.9 gives a comparison of the online and the offline version of the course created for the distance education strand.



Figure 5.9 An online version (left) and an offline version (right) of the course

Instead of using internal websites, some teachers also created their personal teaching websites by using existing commercial web service providers which offer a free quota of space such as public email accounts, blogs, Google Sites and Moodle. These teachers chose to use external service providers because they found institutional support inadequate to meet their pedagogical needs. They adopted free tools (Figure 5.10), in an attempt to increase interaction (mainly discussion and consultation) within their classes.

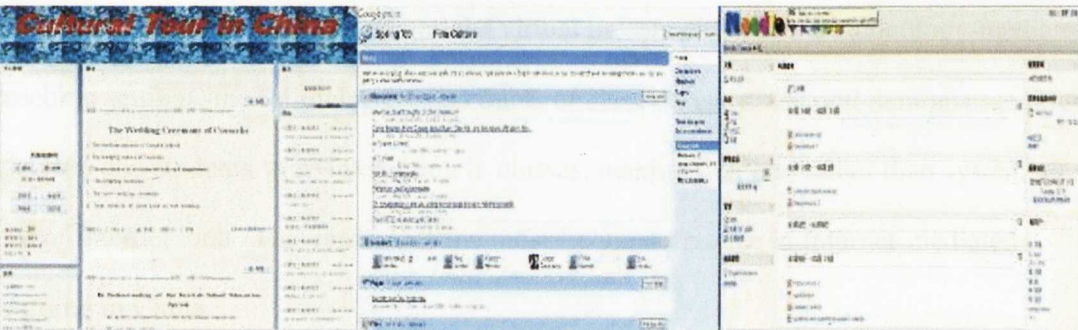


Figure 5.10 Examples of a blog (U12), a Google Site (U14) and a Moodle site (U17)

Distinct from institutional websites in the state-run universities, but similar to personal teaching sites (e.g. blogs, Moodle sites), websites hosted by international partnership institutions (U19 and U22) made regular use of virtual learning environments (VLEs) for both administrative and teaching purposes, following their British parent/partner's educational practice. As shown in Figure 5.11 below, U19 adopted a WebCT platform while U22 selected Moodle. In addition, both U19 and U22 were exploring the potential of employing more interactive environments to support their students' open intercultural learning and socialising, respectively. For example, U22 attempted to run a wiki space for intercultural exchange (Section 6.4). Although such efforts appeared preliminary and marginal within the current context of Chinese education, they stand as vehicles for potential innovation.

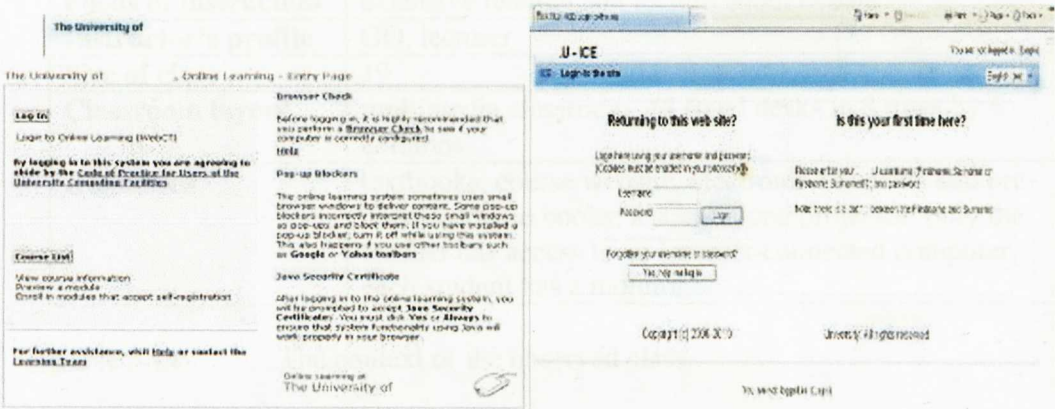


Figure 5.11 The interfaces of VLEs from U19 and U22

Having viewed both the physical and the virtual presentations of the technology-mediated teaching settings, the following two accounts of class observations will demonstrate how teachers and students were interacting in classes, making flexible, rather than systematic, use of Internet tools. This represents the most frequent practice in Internet-mediated learning in China.

5.3.3.3 Example 1: U11

• Context

GQ taught an Extensive Reading course to year-1 English majors at the School of Foreign Languages in U11. Since 2006 when the university as a whole moved to a Higher Education Park in a suburban area far from the old campus, heavy investment has been made in the construction of network infrastructure and multimedia equipment. GQ, like his colleagues, was therefore able to use multimedia classrooms. Table 5.14 provides the contextual information in detail and Figure 5.12 shows a photo of a multimedia classroom.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Duration and date | 10:00-11:40 am, 07/11/2008, Friday |
| Type of institution | Ordinary |
| Location | in Nanjing, the capital city of Jiangsu Province, Eastern China |
| Level of class | undergraduates majoring in English |
| Focus of instruction | extensive reading and lecture about debate |
| Instructor's profile | GQ, lecturer |
| Size of class | 19 |
| Classroom layout | multimedia classroom, 48 fixed desks in 8 rows by 6 columns |
| Resources | textbooks, course website, electronic handouts and pre-downloaded e-books; a stand-alone projector; only the teacher has access to an Internet-connected computer, each student has a monitor |

Table 5.14 The context of the observed class



Figure 5.12 The multimedia classroom

- **Procedure**

I observed the last two sessions in the morning. GQ arrived at the multimedia room earlier than his students to power up the computer system. He started the *Extensive Reading* course website, clicked open his class folder and checked through the files he would use in the class. He minimised all the windows for easy access when in use. When the bell rang, the class started.

GQ introduced the coming activities – the first session was devoted to reading both from the textbook (and its courseware) and from the e-books, followed by the viewing of a video clip; the second session consisted of a lecture about how to take part in debates, followed by another video viewing. The topic of the class was invention, and in the textbook Henry Ford was introduced (Figure 5.13). Before he began the text, he warmed up his students by asking them how much they knew about this inventor. After getting some students to answer this question, he opened the Wikipedia page and searched ‘Henry Ford’ in English. He read the beginning section of the online text to the class as he scrolled down the screen. Instead of using the textbook, GQ directed the class to read the screens so that he could use this time for writing notes on the board.

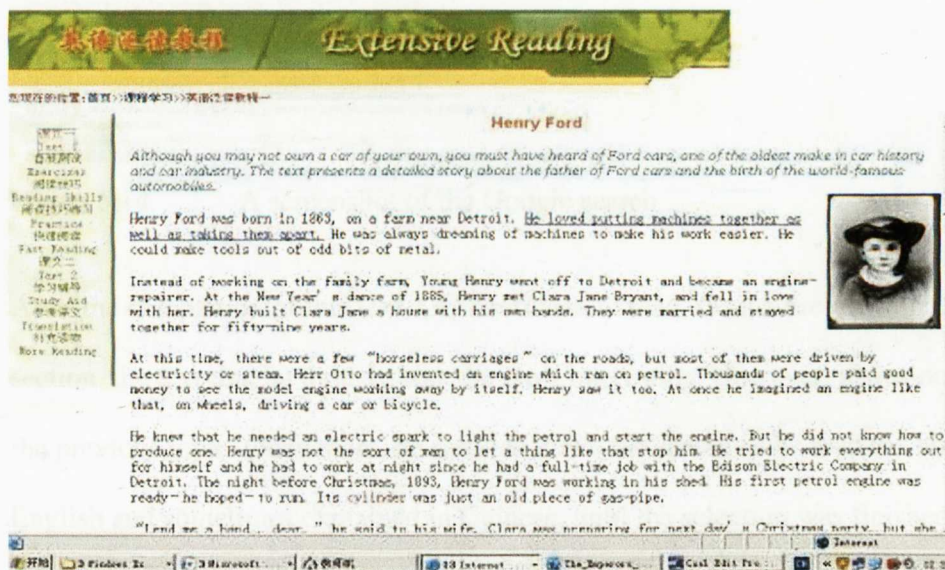


Figure 5.13 A screenshot of the *Extensive Reading* course website in U11

The online text provided an electronic version of the textbook, with a few added graphics and pop-up windows with lexical and grammatical annotations visible on mouse-click. Exercises on the menu were the same as those from the textbook. There were no additional links to external resources, or attached cultural notes. After some lexical and textual analysis, GQ asked in Chinese what the four great inventions of ancient China were and how to express those in English. When no one could give the full answers in English, he opened the Google China website and did a search. The following screenshot (Figure 5.14) shows his use of the Google search with the key word ‘great inventions’.



Figure 5.14 A screenshot of the Google search

After the completion of this text, GQ continued to read, from a pre-downloaded e-book section, the text that he thought was the most interesting. However, it was not related to the previous topic. Once more, he scrolled down the screen as he read the text in English and sometimes explained in Chinese, until the selection was finished. He suggested that his students read the rest by themselves after class. In the remaining

time, he played a video clip pre-downloaded from the National Broadcasting Company's website. It was about the 2008 US presidential debate. GQ played it with pauses as he wanted to intervene with explanations or comments. However, no specific listening/viewing requirements were set for the students. This video clip was replayed during the break while the students were free to relax as they wished.

The purpose of playing this video clip was to help the students form a better idea about debate in English. It was also to be used as a warm-up for the next session – the lecture about debate. GQ maximised his Word document window and explained the key elements of taking part in a debate and then focused on the differences between introducing facts and opinions. Some exercises were followed by oral practice. In the final part of his class, he played another pre-downloaded video clip showing situations highlighting cultural differences in giving and receiving gifts. Before he played the video he asked the students to guess the relationship between the two roles. While watching he requested them to observe the differences in different cultural settings. When the details were discussed, both in English and Chinese, he also related the topic to the students' own experiences and invited some anecdotes. I observed that the students became interested and more responsive to the discussion topic than they had been in the previous slots, although the class was about to break for lunch.

After class, while awaiting a commuter coach, GQ explained that his extensive reading class was intended to be 'more than a reading comprehension class' as would conventionally be taken as a training course for reading skills such as skimming and scanning. He saw it as 'an integrative course' that combined different language skills development, and, as he emphasised, the teaching materials should be of 'a practical value' to the students as well as 'something to attract their interest'. That explained why he

prepared the lesson with multiple resources. However, he also realised that it was time-consuming to keep doing so, especially to search the Internet for suitable materials for his particular teaching purposes, although some teaching goals in the same class might not seem relevant to each other. While he had increased the input of the target cultural and linguistic materials, especially by using textual and audio-visual materials, he thought it was all the more important for the students themselves to ‘experience and learn about the target culture’. However, he and his colleagues shared the view that their students (and the whole generation) were ‘too much reliant on the teachers to feed them everything’. He considered that his students had been spoon-fed since their primary school education, and, therefore, that it was ‘rather difficult for the university teachers to make a fundamental change’ (U11-FieldNotes-GQ, 07/11/2008).

5.3.3.4 Example 2: U13

- ***Context***

The course RR taught to her class was a compulsory one for year-3 students majoring in tourism. The class observed dealt with two consecutive sessions of the unit RR had prepared for teaching about individuality/individualism. In the previous week’s session, she had distributed an article printed from a web resource introducing different influential figures in US history who are considered to be examples of self-fulfilment. Her aim was to take the students through the article, exploring content and lexical points, as well as enhancing their understanding of individuality/individualism in ‘western culture’. The contextual information is provided in the Table 5.15.

- ***Procedure***

As a feature of her class, pairs of students were requested in turn to give a short presentation that they had prepared before going to the class. They were given the

freedom to choose whatever topics they were interested in and to source materials from the media they were able to access, whether in print or online.

The first session started with two pairs (4 female students) giving presentations, as part of the routine class activities. They uploaded the PowerPoint files to the teacher’s computer while RR was making some opening remarks. The two topics were Singles’ Day and Hand Model respectively. The first topic was chosen on purpose for that particular day because in China 11th November (consider the four single ‘1’s in ‘11.11’) was unofficially dedicated to the unmarried, especially younger people. The photo (Figure 5.15) below shows the Singles’ Day presentation. The second topic referred to an increasingly popular career among girls who wanted to be hand models. Both pairs read out the information presented in the slides which included photos, background music, and texts in Chinese with English translation.

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Duration and date | 8:00-9:40 am, 11/11/2008, Tuesday |
| Type of institution | College |
| Location | in a city in southern Jiangsu Province, Eastern China |
| Level of class | undergraduates majoring in tourism |
| Focus of instruction | individualism/individuality |
| Instructor’s profile | RR, associate professor |
| Size of class | about 100 (a combined class) |
| Classroom layout | auditorium, student seating is set in a conventional lecture-like layout, in which assembled desks and seats are fixed |
| Resources | printed handouts, textbooks, only the teacher has access to an Internet-connected computer, connected to an overhead projector; a screen curtain is in the front of the room and loudspeakers are at the corners |

Table 5.15 The context of the observed class in U13

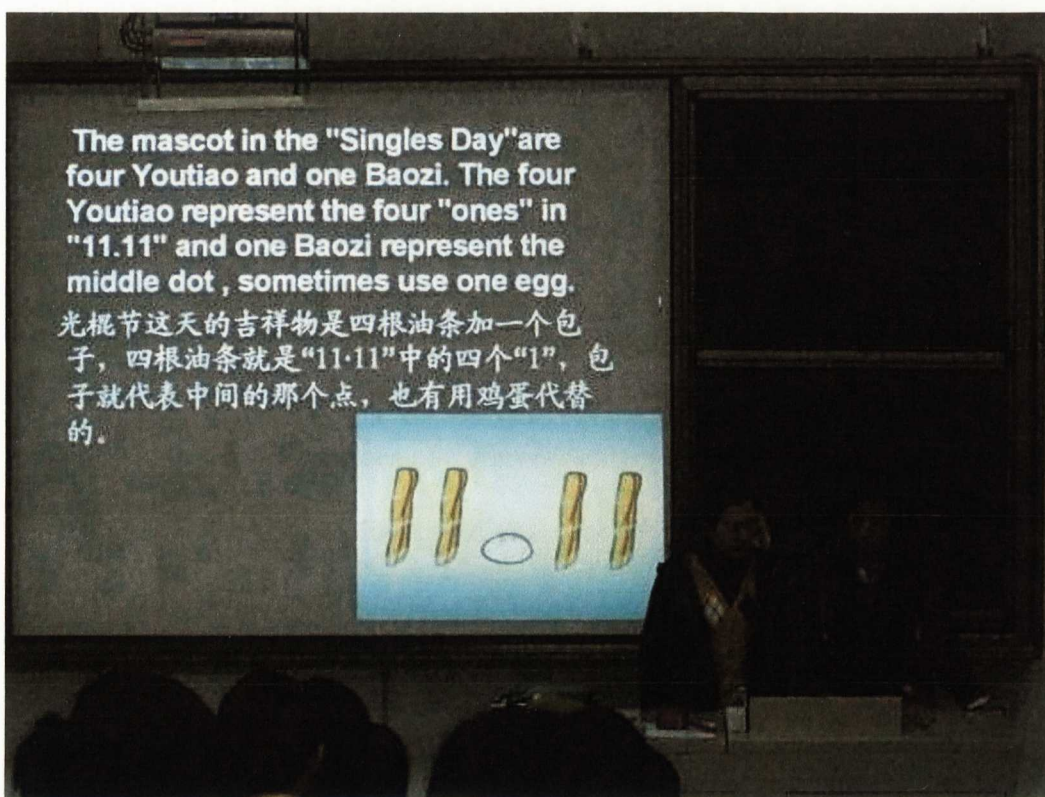


Figure 5.15 A 'Singles' Day' presentation

After 20 minutes or so, RR took back the floor with some comments and compliments on their presentations and started her lecture using the handouts from the previous week. She explained the words and expressions and the key concepts (such as personality, identity, etc.) when going through the text. This lasted about 10 minutes before she shifted to her PowerPoint slides displaying various figures (e.g. Ernest Hemingway, Marilyn Monroe, Joe DiMaggio and Beverly Sills) that the text mentioned. She had downloaded these images from the Internet and edited the slides with images, texts and Web links. However, she did not use the in-built hyperlinks she had prepared, suggesting instead that the students could do it themselves after class. For the remaining 15 minutes she shifted back to the paragraphs again and continued with the lexical and conceptual explanation, displaying some examples such as Henry Ford and his assembly line and mass production concepts. It was noticeable that some

students, especially those sitting in the back rows began to lose concentration, whispering to each other.

After a break, two more student presentations followed. The third student pair gave a presentation on 'Men in Hollywood'. Compared with the earlier presentations, theirs included an additional interactive element, i.e. they showed the bio-data and played audio recordings of the voices of different actors while masking their images and names, then asked fellow students to guess their identities. This strategy caught the class's attention and some Hollywood movie fans offered their answers to the class. Names like 'Tom Cruise', 'Will Smith' and 'Nicolas Cage' were heard. If the answers were correct, the presenters would click to reveal the images of the 'Hollywood Men' in question. The last pair introduced the film *A Beautiful Mind* and its subject John Nash with details of his biography and contributions to Game Theory. They read the slides, on which were displayed illustrations and scripts with translations.

For the remaining half of the session, RR arranged a viewing slot with video clips on the themes of 'anti-globalisation' and 'globalisation is good', pre-downloaded from China-based websites. The purpose of this session was to introduce a new topic on the pros and cons of globalisation. She played the clips only once due to time restrictions, and asked the class to watch them online in their own time suggesting that they could use them as sources for forthcoming presentations.

After class RR explained in a short conversation with me that arranging multiple student presentations was a 'trade-off issue' because of the group size. She complained that the large group class was set up by the Teaching Administration Office and she had to accept this, although the decision did not make sense to her. Therefore, she had to take a realistic

approach to teaching which was quite different to a normal class setting. She assumed that students would be motivated by the opportunity to give their own presentations in class and that this would save her laborious work. If she were simply to lecture herself all the time, she would have been exhausted. With regard to using online resources, she found that it was less meaningful to display a web page of textual information to such a big class as the students from the back and sides could not read clearly. All she could do was to encourage the students to chase or search for the information after class. ‘You never know, they are more skilful [in searching] than I am’ (U13-FieldNotes-RR, 11/11/2008), she suggested. More difficult, as she admitted, was to build up an online learning space to maintain communication and discussion, which would exceed her work commitment.

5.3.3.5 Analysis of the two classes

The above two observations were isolated samples of the teaching provided in these two institutions and the contexts differed to a large extent, with U11 being a small class consisting of English majors and U13 a large class for non-English majors. Clearly, the courses were different, the former being an extensive reading course and the latter a culture-focused course, resulting in different teaching aims. In U11 GQ wanted to help his students develop a combination of language skills and cultural awareness, by selecting a variety of materials from external sources like the Internet. In RR’s class from U13, her aim was to help the students to learn about and through culture and language teaching. Pedagogically, GQ led a more conventional lecture-type reading class, without much active participation from students in his small class. By contrast, RR managed to organise presentations by some students in her combined class, allowing them to bring topics of personal interest to the class.

With regard to accessing cultural resources, both classes involved the use of resources from both the target and the home culture, albeit to varying degrees. It was evident that while GQ exhibited input from the target culture as well as the home culture (e.g. the four ancient great inventions), some students in RR's class were encouraged to express their interest in local cultural phenomena (e.g. the Singles' Day). This contrast may suggest that in language classes, student culture merits pedagogical attention in the process of teaching language and culture, both as input and interaction. To bring student culture into the language class, as was observed, is on the one hand likely to make it easier to balance the input between the target culture and the home culture, while on the other it will potentially help students go beyond essentialist views of culture. In addition, students will find greater motivation when their own life experience is related to what they are learning about, which should be conducive to learner autonomy and active learning.

The pedagogical differences in teaching aims, content and class management also shaped the use of Internet tools differently. From my observations, it can be seen that in the case of U11 GQ did a lot more searching and selecting than RR in the case of U13. By contrast, their students seemed to do the opposite, i.e. U11 students were much less active in searching for and selecting external learning materials than their counterparts from U13, owing to the different demands made on them by their teachers. The observations show how active the students from U13 were in class in delivering short presentations, often with the help of Internet resources which they had researched outside class. However they seemed broadly to share practice in terms of using the Internet in class, in that teachers used Internet tools in a limited way and students did not get involved in using any tools directly in class.

To sum up, these two examples may or may not be representative. However, they did help to reveal some contexts in which Internet tools were used, and more importantly, what pedagogies were adopted for language class in diverse contexts. In a conventional sense, neither class included ‘intercultural interaction’, i.e. direct communication with people from the target culture. Nevertheless, running an Internet search exposed students to a range of cultural resources from the target culture. The students were also able to explore and express their own cultural interests in the class, taking them towards a level of ‘interdiscourse communication’ (Scollon and Scollon 2001a, b; Piller 2007), although this might occur beyond the teacher’s pedagogical expectation and task design. The two classes showed examples of using individual Internet tools for teaching and learning language and culture. Classes that make systematic use of Internet tools for teaching and learning activities are discussed in Section 5.4.2.

5.3.4 Data from interviews

Complementary to the documentary data and observational reports, this section presents data from the participants’ subjective accounts (i.e. formal and informal interviews and chats). The topics focused primarily on participants’ views and experiences of the institutional context, pedagogical aims and practices, and technological provision and support, while questions were context-specific and varied. Owing to the tight schedules, most of the interviews were conducted in Chinese as the interviewees preferred the convenience of this and fewer students were interviewed than teachers.

For reasons of space, it is impossible to present all the interview data. Rather, a synthesis is offered. Voices from interviews were initially categorised into two main strands, i.e. Non-distance (i.e. English Major and College English) education on the one hand, and Distance Education for English Majors on the other. This division was made because sometimes

interviews took place with teachers from both English Major education and College English education sections while at other times the same interviewees taught courses in both sections. In the strand for distance education, it was impossible to approach students and so none were interviewed.

5.3.4.1 Views of Non-distance education teachers and students

- ***Interpretations of the ICC goal***

In interviews, interpretations of what constituted intercultural communicative competence varied considerably from teacher to teacher because national guidelines did not provide a framework or a specific model of ICC, as the interviewees realised. Institutionally, interpretations of ICC were not agreed or shared between heads of department and staff members, either. Some institutions interpreted it as knowledge about social cultures of English speaking countries and Chinese culture (U6-InfINT-LFJ, 20/10/2008) and/or as an ability to obtain specific perspectives and cultural experiences from case analysis and cultural comparison (U9-InfINT-FWW, 27/10/2008).

In most cases in which College English courses and some courses for English majors were taught (such as *Survey of Great Britain and America*), the cultural component was directly interpreted as cultural knowledge, or cultural background information, and even more specifically as annotated culture notes, although in some institutions ICC was officially regarded as ‘the ultimate goal’ (U11-InfINT-LXX, 05/11/2008). In this disciplinary area, teachers had to decide on whether and to what extent to include cultural/intercultural knowledge, or simply to focus on language skills. It was common to hear claims such as ‘[in our institution,] we focus on integrated language proficiency, and ICC is not a hierarchical goal’ (U4-InfINT-LXP, 10/10/2008) and ‘cultural

knowledge can be introduced as culture notes to the text in language teaching' (U2&3-GINT, 23/09/2008). Another representative view was that culture should be

'probably surrounding the topic [...] quite closely related to the topic or the material compiled in the textbook [...] and also we can find more materials, for example, to [...] make them aware of the culture elements. So I think it's very useful [...] just within the text.'

U9-INT-YQH, 29/10/2008

This view emphasises that cultural topics as input should be immediately related to the text content rather than being presented as an array of cultural themes to be explored. Such cultural input was usually from other media such as print, audio-visual and online resources. Teachers' personal experiences of study abroad was another source (U9-INT-YQH, 29/10/2008), as more and more teachers had been financed to visit overseas universities. In this regard, the cultural component was viewed as something additional to the language skills.

In teaching more culture-focused courses such as *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication*, concepts and theories were the key components, in addition to cultural comparison, critical incident analysis (or case studies) and role plays (e.g. U9-InfINT-FWW, 27/10/2008; U13-INT-RR, 12/11/2008). It was noteworthy that quite a few interviewees indicated that they had started to provide courses of teaching about the home culture (U2, U3, U6, U9, and U11, etc.) in English. They either compiled teaching materials or selected existing ones from different sources. For instance, in discussing the Daoist philosophical classic *Dao De Jing (Tao Te Ching)*, WL (U6-INT-WL, 20/10/2008) adopted a translation from the West. He found that his students were

more interested in reading the English version than the Chinese one as the former was 'easy to understand'. Although he insisted that 'some original meaning was lost in translation', he argued that it was useful to help the students to learn about and reflect on their own traditional culture from the perspective of an outsider. Although such courses remained optional, it seemed that teachers became aware of the importance of teaching their home culture to develop their students' integrative cultural literacy, as SL noted:

'I teach Chinese Culture in English, which is an optional course. It focuses on students' self-development. They need liberal education so as to enhance their all-round ability. The English language here plays a unique role, which helps students to express themselves in a more direct and effective way. And this will also enable them to understand intercultural sensitivity, cultural diversity, tolerance and self-awareness.'

U2-InfINT-SL, 23/09/2008 (my translation)

In addition to teaching about knowledge of cultures and intercultural communication, some teachers also experimented with teaching through simulation, which was skill-oriented. For example, on the basis of a brief survey of her classes, which suggested that most of the students would want to work in joint-venture companies and study abroad, ZL encouraged both her English and non-English major students to act out simulations related to the knowledge and contexts discussed in the textbook. She emphasised the goal of the course, *International Business Communication*, as follows:

'[I focus on how to develop my students'] international communicative skills, or to develop their competence, to raise their awareness of

intercultural communication, for the students to communicate more effectively in the future.'

U12-INT-ZL, 10/11/2008 (brackets added)

In this way, she claimed that the students could learn to think and behave from different cultural perspectives. However, in the light of different understandings and interpretations, there was no agreed and established assessment scheme for ICC, and national-level examinations such as CET and TEM do not include cultural components, let alone ICC as a whole. Most often cognitive cultural knowledge from textbooks was tested (U2&3-GINT, 23/09/2008; etc.).

- ***Use of the Internet for teaching and learning activities***

The Internet was involved, to a greater or lesser degree, in teaching and learning activities. Excluding the courseware-based online learning platforms which were not automatically linked to the Internet, websites were created as a medium for knowledge about and resources in intercultural communication theory and concepts, and case studies (U2&3-GINT, 23/09/2008; U13-INT-RR, 11/11/2008), as also evidenced in the online observation presented above. Search engines were the most frequently used tools for accessing language and cultural materials. Google and Baidu were the top two choices. English language learning websites were the most popular sites that the students visited. However, these websites were not necessarily from English speaking countries. More often the students accessed domestic sites for learning resources such as listening and vocabulary (U6-GINT, 21/10/2008). By contrast, teachers might prefer using websites offering authentic and high-quality materials, such as the BBC and the VOA sites from English speaking countries (e.g. U4-INT-ZJ, 10/10/2008).

Regarding the use of communication tools, setting up class email accounts was perhaps the most common method for out-of-class information delivery, and class blogs were beginning to be used as well. Most teachers expressed their willingness to find a partner class from the target culture so that intercultural communication could take place, or at least to direct language use in real contexts (e.g. U2&3-GINT, 23/09/2008). Some one-off applications of communication tools were used for particular projects. For example, teachers from both U6 and U9 mentioned that they had worked together by chance, in collaboration with an American university, for a debating project. Through using videoconferencing, student candidates from the two universities received training in debating and had the opportunity to use online communication.

In addition, it was common practice for students to join China-based synchronous and asynchronous online communities such as QQ and Fetion chat groups (similar to MSN Messenger chat), QQ Zone (a blog-based space), and Xiaonei (similar to Facebook) for networking. However, these were far from mainstream and rarely used for pedagogical activities, although some teachers started to use short-text messaging (e.g. based on QQ and Fetion) to send their students messages and learning materials such as word list (U17-InfINT-CHS, 17/11/2008).

- ***Difficulties of using the Internet for intercultural teaching and learning***

Although the teachers and students reported using a range of Internet information and communication tools both in class and outside it, they had problems in using them for intercultural language activities. These difficulties ranged from pedagogical limitations to practical constraints.

Pedagogically, a frequently raised issue was that on many occasions online learning occurred only in the courseware-based learning management system, the materials of which were self-contained. However, many teachers complained that such materials were often no better than an electronic copy of the textbook. Although students were expected to develop their autonomous learning with such courseware in an online environment, they received merely 'computer-based teaching' rather than 'computer-assisted language learning' (U2&3-GINT, 23/09/2008). Generally it was felt that students 'liked using the Internet for anything but study' (U17-InfINT-CHS, 17/11/2008). Many institutions shared this worry as they thought that their students were not self-disciplined enough when online and quite a few institutions decided that year-1 students should not be allowed to have access to computers and the Internet (U2&3-GINT, 23/09/2008; U9-InfINT-FWW, 27/10/2008).

At the same time, it was a challenge to make use of online resources effectively and strategically, in the face of the huge amount of information accessible via search engines. In interviews, almost all the teachers and students admitted that while searching for online resources was relatively easy, selecting and evaluating them proved a time-consuming task. Teachers assumed that their students would be more competent than them in information literacy; students, on the contrary, preferred their teachers to provide learning resources (U6-GINT, 21/10/2008). However, not many teachers were professionally trained in information literacy (U12-INT-GPY, 16/03/2009). Both teachers and students wished for a 'comprehensive online resource bank' (e.g. U2&3-GINT, 23/09/2008; U6-GINT, 21/10/2008) that might cover the cultural and language knowledge they needed. However, they all knew that this was an ideal. In practice no initiatives have yet been taken either individually or collaboratively to realise such an ideal.

In addition, most of the teachers reported feeling negative about the use of communication tools such as forums, chat-rooms and instant messaging in class because it 'took too much time' and it was 'unnecessary' to use communication tools while the students could communicate face-to-face. Outside the class, while it would be viable to ask students to engage in online discussion, extra costs and Internet accessibility seemed to be a big concern on the students' part (U6-InfINT-LFJ, 20/10/2008). Except for U4 which scheduled certain free hours for students to participate in online learning on campus (U4-INT-ZJ, 10/10/2008), all the other universities charged their students for accessing the Internet.

Other reasons for negativity about the Internet were technical: breakdowns were frequent and campus computer equipment was not always well maintained.

Institutional financial policy could also affect technological provision significantly. For example, in order to reduce cost, the administrative committee of the School of Foreign Studies in U12 (U12-INT-ZL, 11/11/2008; U12-INT-GPY, 16/03/2009) decided to cut expenditure on the Internet subscription because they thought that the Internet services were not used sufficiently by staff members who seemed to prefer to work at home.

Students too could be asked to use those in the university library. This was a problem for teachers who wanted to use the Internet in class.

5.3.4.2 Views of teachers from distance education

Interviews included teachers from the Open Universities and Institutes of Distance Education (IDEs). While no official statistics about changes in student enrolment were obtained, from these interviews it became evident that registrations at the Open Universities had been falling over the years, partly because of the national expansion of

university and college enrolment, and partly owing to competition from the emergent IDEs that are affiliated to ordinary universities. According to the Deans from the head office of the English Department of the Open Universities (U5-InfINT-N&L, 06/10/2008), the Achilles' heel of the Open Universities was that they did not have the authority to grant a degree, whereas their competitors were able to do so.

Regardless of this challenge, the Open Universities had taken action to streamline administration and to establish a centralised online platform to introduce consistency in teaching and learning activities, especially for the purpose of formative assessment. This centralised system had at least two positive effects, according to XY, from U21. The first was that the course chair from the head office could supervise and support online learning and discussion activities at branch campuses with flexibility. Referring to her online course in *Cross-cultural Communication*, XY explained:

'this is a topic posted by LZR [the course chair], and other posts were also from our colleagues. Previously we worked as a team in Cross-cultural Communication and some topics were adapted from my courseware [...]. For example, this topic is posted here, and the students are asked to respond with their opinions.'

'Yes, they [the students] should follow up the posts. Sometimes I also follow up. As a teacher, I should offer feedback, for instance, well done or something else like pointing out a mistake and making suggestions for improvement. Sometimes LZR will also post or follow up the posts, and give some encouragement to what they have done.'

U21-INT-XY, 02/12/2008 (my translation, brackets added)

What XY described was a type of joint moderation of student online discussions. In addition to her direct mediation and instruction, LZR from the head office could also visit and interact with her class. This participation from an external teacher was an additional motivation to the class. Another benefit was that the participation of central academics made possible direct feedback from students in a branch class, with the result that actions could be taken more quickly in response to it (U5-InfINT-N&L, 06/10/2008). XY focused her attention on their grammatical mistakes and idiomatic expressions, which she thought were the main problems for her students. Regarding the content of discussion, she insisted that she would not intervene too much because the cultural concepts and topics were discussed in face-to-face sessions and sufficient learning materials were uploaded to the course website (see Figure 5.9 in Section 5.3.3.2) for them to read and explore more, if they wanted.

The second advantage was that all the online discussions took place in an official virtual space that was firewall-protected. Before the centralised learning platform was set up, branch universities used their own online systems which were not necessarily well protected. XY recalled her anguish when an embedded BBS in her courseware was attacked by a so-called religious group, resulting in the loss of all the data and the shut-down of the forum. However, while the security was strengthened, the lack of external accessibility and flexibility to collaborate with outsiders became a major downside. Before the centralised platform was implemented, XY used to invite her overseas friends to join her course BBS as volunteers and engage in discussions with her students. In this way she introduced intercultural exchanges in her class and the students were motivated by communicating with native speakers. However, with the introduction of password protection, her volunteers were no longer able to access the platform because they were not

officially employed by the institution. She considered that setting up an external forum was an option but such online discussion records were not officially recognised. On her own part, this extra work would not be calculated as workload, although she was happy to ignore that. However, it would be problematic on both the volunteers' and the students' sides, as she cautioned:

'I do want to get him [the volunteer] work like that but I would not choose to trouble him like that. Do you pay him? Right? You know that he's really a nice guy and very warm-hearted, but you cannot be too demanding; once or twice, maybe it's OK. [...] So, [...] now there are multiple requirements [of online learning and discussion], from our institution, from the head office, and if you want to ask them [the students] to do another online discussion, how could they survive? In that case, an alternative is to recommend some external ones for their open discussion as they wish.'

U21-INT-XY, 02/12/2008 (my translation, brackets added)

In another case in U16, LYG (U16-InfINT-LYG, 17/11/2008) recalled the institutional effort that had been made to run a telecollaborative project with a US university in 2004. The main purpose was to enhance students' intercultural awareness through online contact. Teachers on both sides negotiated a teaching agenda and prepared teaching materials for online instruction (with some video-conferencing sessions) as well as offline learning. Before the online discussions started, he asked his students to have some warm-up discussions among themselves. To ensure active participation, he assessed students' contributions in class throughout the term, their reflective essays, and their performance in an oral examination of 20 questions from the partner teacher.

However, he found that the outcomes were unsatisfactory, owing to four main problems that constrained the telecollaborative effort. Pedagogically, the different cultural backgrounds of both sides did not provide enough incentives to trigger intercultural communication and discussion. The students were more inclined to talk about their own culture than explore that of others'. Individually, adult students from the US and Chinese students found that they had little in common. At the managerial level, the time difference made synchronous online communication less than ideal as LYG had to arrange the video-conferencing sessions at night, for the convenience of his US partner. However, he observed that each time quite a few of the American students were either late or absent for the online communication. Sitting in front of the screen his class had not had enough partners to communicate with, but only 'the apologising face of the partner teacher'. Last but not least, insufficient technical support and connection problems were de-motivating for the students. He concluded that such a pedagogical practice was unsustainable and it did not continue afterwards.

Compared with the Open Universities, the IDEs appeared more traditional in their pedagogy and practice. CL, head of the IDE of U14, acknowledged that the only difference between his institutional teaching and the conventional one was that his students were provided with more sessions for distance learning than face-to-face tutorials (U14-InfINT-CL, 05/12/2008). The online platform provided teaching and learning materials that were exactly the same as those of the textbooks, except that they took the form of an electronically uploaded copy. No specific course had yet been designated for teaching ICC other than one entitled *Survey of Great Britain and America*, which was regarded as 'out-of-date'. In terms of using the Internet for teaching, he contended that searching for resources online, playing or downloading film clips from the Internet and submitting assignments through the platform were the three most used online functions in his institute.

In his view, although running Internet searches through Google and Baidu was 'time-saving and resourceful', the overabundance of information made selection impossible. In addition, he believed that online materials were often 'too personal', hence less authoritative than those from textbooks. He felt that students would rely on getting answers from their teachers instead of searching by themselves, unless they were requested to do so.

CL assumed that communicating with foreigners online would be the most straightforward method of motivating his students but this would take too much time in class, and in reality it was almost impossible since the students' level of proficiency in English was too low to communicate with foreigners. In addition, he was cautious about the potential risks of politically-incorrect messages emanating from foreigners, which could cause him great trouble. Communication within the online class forum was now the norm. However, he was unhappy that the students were more willing to read others' posts rather than to contribute their own opinions. The teachers seemed too busy to reply to the posts while some students even plagiarised by copying and pasting others' posts. Training was difficult because most of the teachers were employed by other faculties of the university, i.e. the teachers were from the English Department, not convenient to be gathered for training.

To sum up, in the distance education strand for English majors, although the level of English education in this sector was generally considered lower than conventional university education, there was indirect evidence from the examples that teachers had made efforts to enrich their teaching with cultural input from native speakers and empower students through Internet-mediated intercultural communication. However, for various reasons, such a practice seemed unsustainable. Regarding the IDE, there was no evidence of efforts to pursue intercultural teaching and learning, nor was it possible to identify any

significant advances in Internet-mediated pedagogy. Beyond these, other more successful examples might nonetheless exist.

5.4 Initial findings

In spite of its limitations, the data presented an up-to-date picture of Internet-mediated English language education at tertiary level in China. Diverse and complex as the situations were, in various types of institutions teachers and learners were applying various information and communication tools to assist language teaching and learning activities, although the degree to which they were doing so varied. Some findings emerged in respect of perceptions of the learning and teaching of ICC in language education, the intended purposes and actual use of Internet technologies for language activities, and the practicalities of using such tools. At the same time, a diverse range of examples were identified as potential cases which are further explored in Chapter 6.

5.4.1 Key issues

5.4.1.1 *The recognition and implementation of the ICC goal*

In all the data sets, ICC has been identified as a goal, even if long-term, of foreign language education. However, the concept of ICC appears to be most commonly interpreted at a cognitive level, i.e. as knowledge about, and awareness of, languages, cultures and intercultural communication. This interpretation shapes the course syllabuses and textbooks, in which culture is still largely treated as a component which is independent of language skills, as evidenced by the separation of language skills-focused courses and culture-focused courses, especially in the College English education section. Even in *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication* courses, content is focused more on knowledge about theories, concepts and case analysis than on affective and behavioural development.

While it is necessary to teach and learn about cultural knowledge and concepts, such a separation between the cognitive domain and the other dimensions of ICC, suggests that what prevails is the essentialist view of culture as static, unchanging social objects, i.e. as facts and figures. In contrast, communication at a personal level is not much emphasised.

5.4.1.2 The use of ‘authentic’ resources

Both teachers and students, in the main, still insist that the priority in English language education should be to develop native-speaker-like English language proficiency. In line with this perception, despite the newly stated goal of ICC, it is not difficult to understand why on the whole both teachers and students prioritise inputs from the target culture over those from their own culture, with the intention of obtaining ‘authentic’ resources. The demand for ‘authentic’ input from the native-speaker source includes both materials and human resources. The former usually comprises texts from course books and audio-visual clips, which are considered somewhat out-of-date. To compensate for this, teachers and students often search the Internet and visit professional websites from the target culture for updated materials. Yet, one challenge to teachers and students remains how to search and select online resources effectively, considering the overabundance of online information they are faced with. The issue of human resources is dogged by the dilemma of the great shortage of native speakers for face-to-face communication in the teaching and learning process regardless of the presence of overseas teachers in almost every institution. There are a few limited examples of engaging native speakers in the teaching and learning process, especially in the case of the distance education strand.

5.4.1.3 The development of autonomy

From document analysis it can be seen that although the concept of ‘autonomous learning’ is used, in reality this equates to students’ self-study with courseware-based online materials. This is reminiscent of the behaviourist model of CALL (Shi 2006) where students are expected to learn from pre-determined materials (the same as textbooks), using pre-designed procedures, and helped by pre-fabricated hints and answers. This individualistic learning scenario does not provide a sense of community which can encourage collective learning. Moreover, such learning systems can hardly prepare students to adopt a flexible learning approach to the use of external resources searched through the Internet. In addition, learning through the courseware does not promote language use and intercultural communication in social contexts. The kind of lockstep learning associated with behaviourist kinds of CALL seems unlikely to foster learner autonomy. However, existing computer-based, rather than computer-assisted, language learning often frustrates students by forcing them to do nothing more meaningful than getting scores and records of ‘online learning’ in order to pass the assessment (Zhang and Li 2008).

5.4.1.4 The use of Internet tools for pedagogical purposes

Whereas courseware-based learning platforms have little in common with the use of Internet tools, it has been identified that both the teachers and the students use a wide range of Internet tools for pedagogical purposes. However, the applications used vary, with an overwhelming use of information tools, particularly search engines, while the use of communication tools remains marginal. This is particularly the case with in-class sessions which are constrained by time, class-size, teaching goals, lack of access to networked computers, and lack of co-operation. Outside the class, students may be de-motivated from accessing the Internet by the cost of doing so and the somewhat unsatisfactory Internet

connectivity and stability, which have given rise to complaints not only from students, but also teachers. Despite the inconveniences, enthusiastic teachers still do their best to explore the potential of Internet tools to serve their pedagogical purposes and practices, as well as to engage their students in online searching. From the interviews it can be seen that teachers were eager to have an online pedagogical resource bank that would contain everything they wanted to use for their language classes, although they knew it was unlikely to be achieved.

5.4.2 Potential cases

Some institutions were identified (Table 5.16) as being of potential value for case studies. They met the criteria for selection (see Section 3.3), i.e. demonstrating an involvement in Internet-mediated activities that incorporated intercultural teaching and learning explicitly or implicitly. However, it emerged that it was not realistic to include the distance education strand for further exploration since there was little possibility for focused observations and interviews on site with students. Regarding the remaining four types of HEIs, i.e. the ordinary, the language-focused, the college/institute-level and the international partnership, there was no fundamental difference in the English language programmes offered (bar the international partnership type), because the programmes conform to the national syllabuses. Although institutional features influenced their focuses to an extent, the real differences resided in the particular course and class involved.

While some institutions adopted a top-down approach to setting up institutional online space for teaching and learning activities, others remained more flexible in allowing varieties of personal practice. However, institutional support sometimes did not necessarily lead to an active application of the Internet and the design of Internet-mediated teaching and learning. Teachers' understandings of ICC and their professional knowledge of

| Potential samples | Highlights (institutional and technological) | Highlights (pedagogical and individual) |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| U4 – English Education Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of pre-paid accounts to Ss; • Classrooms equipped with Internet-connected computers and other facilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ts' encouragement of Ss to self-explore and to acquire multi-perspectives by using Internet materials • ICC as a goal is implicit but cultural knowledge is highlighted |
| U6 – School of English Studies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down promotion of the Blackboard system as a teaching platform • Provision of technical training to Ts in using Blackboard | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blended-learning mode • Taking Chinese culture and values into account • Personal teaching blog, emailing available • Used to join in Sino-US debate through videoconferencing |
| U11 – School of Foreign Languages | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Top-down reform of educational informationisation • Institutional short-term scheme for research-based projects • Self-access centre with Internet-connected computers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project-based learning • Ts tutoring + Ss team-working • ICC, not merely knowledge, as an ultimate goal • Personal teaching forum available |
| U14 – Intercultural Institute | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural staff team • Post-graduate level orientation • Gmail service as institutional communication platform • Teaching site without Internet connection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICC-oriented research-based programmes • T's personal use of Google Sites as discussion forum • Online discussion as part of assessment |
| U17 – English Department | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacking intercultural environment • Multi-media classrooms with Internet connection available • Campus conditions for Internet use less favourable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICC not as an explicit goal • T's personal initiative in adopting Moodle as teaching site for discussion • Online discussion as part of assessment |
| U22 – English Language Centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural staff team • Adoption of UK educational system • Provision of official email accounts and online space • 'Free' and convenient Internet access | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intercultural communication as experiential learning with ICC as an implicit goal • Ts' collective teaching preparation with online materials • Internet-mediated teaching and learning as routine • T's personal initiative in setting up an intercultural wiki platform |

Table 5.16 A summary of the potential samples for case studies

Internet tools, as well as students' needs and willingness to participate and cooperate were all the more important in framing pedagogical decisions about the design of intercultural activities with Internet mediation. These complexities either facilitated or impeded the

individuals' (teachers' and students') decisions to develop pedagogical practices using the Internet for intercultural activities.

For instance, in U4, despite the provision of Internet connections for teachers and students in all types of classroom, the use of the Internet in class was far from frequent. In addition, the provision of pre-paid cards to enable students to use the Internet did not lead to the intended result. In U6 the Associate Dean was a proponent of the use of Blackboard within the school and offered training to his fellow colleagues in person. However well-intentioned, he noticed that this did not meet with a warm response but was seen as an extra burden. He also observed that the students were not as active online as had been expected. His junior colleague, WL, created a personal blog as a teaching site instead, as the institution initially only subscribed for a limited number of its classes. Similarly, the Dean in U11 was very enthusiastic about implementing 'educational informationization' (Huang et al. 2007; Kang and Song 2007) in his school and requested his colleagues to upload their teaching web pages to the institutional website although this was not regularly maintained and updated. The Dean also re-structured the teaching calendar for teachers and students to undertake mini-research projects, which would often involve a substantial use of the Internet as a resource. On the positive side, he saw abundant student learning outcomes from this reform, while on the negative side, he heard the teachers complaining about sacrificing their free time without much financial incentive and students' complaining about having to pay extra to use the Internet connection.

Eschewing a top-down approach, institutions like U14 and U17 did not provide sufficient technological support. However, some individual teachers were keen on an Internet-mediated approach to teaching and despite all the inconveniences they managed to implement activities in one way or another. U22 seemed an exceptional case as an

international partnership type. It had rich intercultural exposure and made a significant institutional effort to apply the Internet for teaching and learning. Although there appeared to be no explicit and regular intercultural teaching and learning, an intercultural wiki platform was being piloted.

These examples all looked interesting, but practical issues, such as accessibility and availability, meant that only four of them (Section 4.3) were finally selected for case studies, albeit with an eye for diversity.

5.5 Summary

This chapter offers an overview of current perceptions and practices in Internet mediated language and culture teaching and learning in Chinese tertiary education. While the contexts vary considerably, they also share some common ground and the general findings are broadly identical. Among these, some important ones are 1) recognition of ICC as a cognitive exercise, i.e. knowledge about cultures and intercultural communication, about theories and concepts; 2) the emphasis on using authentic resources as input in the teaching and learning process; 3) the misconception of self-study as autonomous learning; 4) the widespread but unsystematic use of Internet tools for pedagogical purposes. These issues are interrelated and shape the current situation of tertiary English language education in China. Some suggestions are made in relation to each, and will be further explored, together with findings from Chapter 6, in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 The Case Studies

6.1 Overview

In Chapter 5 the survey report generated some key issues. It also played a role in the sample selection for the in-depth case studies in the second stage of fieldwork. A shortlist of potential candidates was identified. After considering issues such as logistics, potential reception, relevance and resources (Stake 2005: 451), four candidates were singled out for in-depth study, with U14, U17, and U22 clustered in the east and U4 in the north (Figure 4.1). These institutions are located in regions that are most economically and culturally developed.

The contexts of each case study differed significantly, as Table 6.1 shows. For example, U4 focused on language training and education, but it enrolled students who were not majoring in English language and literature, requiring them to achieve the same standard as English majors do, at least in the first two years. In U14, an Intercultural Studies Institute was established as a research centre semi-independent of the School of International Studies. In U22, although there was no language-based discipline, all the students received English instruction in lectures and tutorials. English, particularly academic English, was an essential component in students' everyday study. In U17, while the institute specialised in physical education and professions, there was an English language department which focused particularly on English for sport journalism and management.

This chapter takes four cases in these institutions as the subjects for in-depth analysis, in order to elicit how Internet technologies were employed to carry out intercultural language activities in their particular educational contexts.

| Institution | Feature | Course | Student Information |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| U4- English Education Centre | Language | <i>Intensive Reading</i> | B-level, Y-1 Non-English majors |
| U22 – English Language Centre | International partnership | <i>Business English</i> | B-level, Y-1/2 Non-English majors |
| U14 – Intercultural Institute | Language | <i>Cultural Analysis of Film</i> | M-level, Y-1 mixed class |
| U17 – English Department | College-level, specialised | <i>English Literature</i> | B-level, Y-3 English majors |
| Note: U, University; B-level, Bachelor-level; M-level, Master-level; Y, Year | | | |

Table 6.1 Summary of the four institutions

6.2 Developing an analytical framework

As discussed in Chapter 3, I adopted a multiple-case study approach to investigating complex phenomena (Stake 2005). Following de Vaus' (2001) proposal for analysing multiple cases, my first step was to understand each case 'as a whole' within a common framework, followed by a comparison between cases, with an attempt to achieve a higher level of generalisation related to a theory. Technically, I adopted a method called analytical induction, developed by Denzin (1978, in de Vaus 2001: 263), to formulate descriptive generalisations from individual cases and to seek to identify commonalities between cases.

The theoretical framework that was applied to case description drew upon Holliday's (1999) big-small culture concepts, and the Intercultural Communication model proposed by Scollon and Scollon (2001a, b) and Piller (2007), which has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Succinctly, the framework contains three levels of Intercultural Communication: cross-cultural communication, intercultural communication and interdiscourse communication, the distinctions being a continuum of essentialist and negotiated/non-essentialist perspectives on understanding culture and culture in communication. Following this differentiation, the pedagogies of each level refer to teaching about knowledge of cross-cultural communication, teaching about knowledge of and through intercultural

communication between distinctive national cultures, and teaching about Intercultural Communication through interdiscourse communication. While the three levels are progressive in terms of cognition, they interweave with each other in the teaching of language and culture, as in real life.

The following cases were examined under this framework with regard to a selection of contexts, teacher-student perceptions and interactions, and technological mediation in activities, ordered narratives and events based on what are seen as ‘relevant and important’ (de Vaus 2001: 250-251).

6.3 Case 1–U4 Intensive Reading with occasional Internet use

6.3.1 Background

I visited U4 twice (Table 6.2). After a short visit in the first stage, the second visit was meant to concentrate on a couple of teachers who seemed positive about using the Internet for teaching activities. However due to the prospective teachers’ busy schedule the plan changed and I was re-directed to some of their colleagues. Eventually, three teachers felt able to accept my request for observation. In the following analysis, I present two teachers’ cases.

Informed Consent Letters were forwarded to the students via their class email accounts, together with the questionnaires. Only a few students answered the questionnaires during my visit, despite my regular reminders. In addition, due to the teachers’ parallel classes and some interruptions (e.g. a clash with a US delegate visit), classroom observations became less consistent and focused. Data collected from this fieldwork, therefore, appeared fragmentary.

| | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Institution | U4, Language | Case | English Education Centre |
| Teacher | LQ, LXP, CY | Duration | 07-14/10/2008, 06/05-09/06/2009 |
| Student | Y1/2 non-English majors | Data source | Observations, documents, interviews |

Table 6.2 Summary of the key information of Case 1

6.3.2 The context

U4 is a state-owned international institution with official recognition for teaching overseas students Chinese language and culture. It also teaches Chinese students foreign languages as well as Chinese, computer science and technology, finance and accountancy, and it provides training courses for teachers of Chinese as a foreign language. This particular educational environment has ensured its campus is a rich multicultural site for international and Chinese students to socialise in their leisure time off-campus, although they do not mix in the normal courses of study. Languages used on campus are predominantly Chinese, the target language for overseas students to learn and use, and English as a *lingua franca*.

According to its introduction on the institutional home page (U4-D0C/HP, 05/05/2009), the Centre of English Education is one of the major teaching units of U4, responsible for teaching English to non-English major undergraduates and postgraduates in the areas of College English, and English for Specific Purposes. For undergraduates, the Centre offers a range of language skill-focused courses such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation and interpretation. It also organises extracurricular activities such as English speech contests in order to promote students' communicative competence.

The Centre has made particular efforts to comply with teaching reform requirements. Since 2008 non-English majors from several disciplines which demand a high level of language proficiency (e.g. Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language, International Business and Finance) have been required to pass the TEM-4/8, a higher target than the conventional

CET-4/6 requirement. In line with this policy, students from those disciplines are provided with textbooks, e.g. *An Integrated English Course* (Books 1-6), designed for English majors. Other students still follow the CET requirements and use *College English* (New, Books 1-6). Both sets of books have self-contained CD-ROMs of the course content with supplementary audio-visual materials for both instructional and self-study use. Students are encouraged to learn autonomously by using the CD-ROMs or intranet resources after class as a supplement to their classroom work. Through these means, the Centre expects that these supplements not only assist the students 'to combine the lingual knowledge with communicative situations and to learn and master language from functional and cultural perspective' (U4-DOC/HP, 05/05/2009) but also enrich the teachers' teaching methods and contents. To encourage autonomous learning, the Centre also offers each student a pre-paid card for using the university's computers and network free-of-charge for a certain amount of online time.

The Centre adopts a 'floatingly graded classroom mechanism' (U4-DOC/Intro, 05/05/2009), i.e. students move between Class A and Class B depending on their English proficiency level so as to reinforce their autonomous learning with in-class teacher-led study and computer-assisted self-study outside class. Parallel classes are supposed to progress at the same pace. Notably, the Centre claims that:

'This new teaching mode, which features the individually designed instructing package and students' autonomous learning initiative and wide use of the Internet resources both in and outside class, has favorably transferred the teaching pattern from the traditional instructor-oriented to a student-oriented one.'

U4-DOC/Intro, *ibid.*

The institutional intranet is only accessible to teachers and students via their personal accounts. It is primarily used to display notices and as a resource bank of multimedia language learning materials; no communication function is provided. Instead, faculty commonly set up public email accounts to communicate with students. In addition to a class email account, some classes use Fetion messaging service and establish online communities by registering on sites such as Xiaonei Zone.

The Centre has its own multimedia classrooms and language labs (Figure 6.1), both of which are equipped with Internet-connected computers. In multimedia classrooms there is only one networked computer for the teacher's use while in language labs each student desk is provided with a computer which can be controlled by the teacher's computer through a management system called 'New Class' (Figure 6.2). While students can stay and work in the multimedia classroom after class (the computer panel is locked after use), they have to leave the computer lab when the class is over.

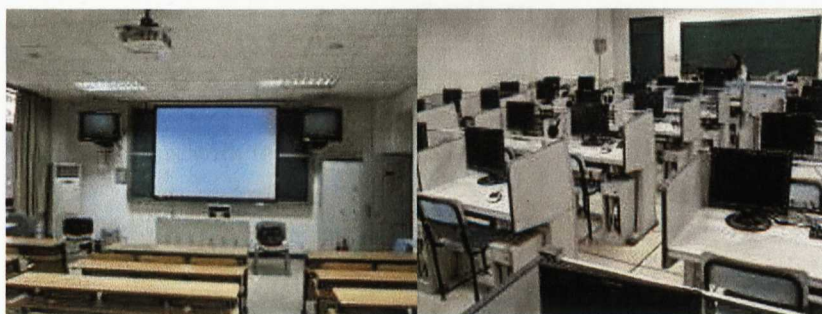


Figure 6.1 The Centre's multimedia classroom (left) and language lab (right)

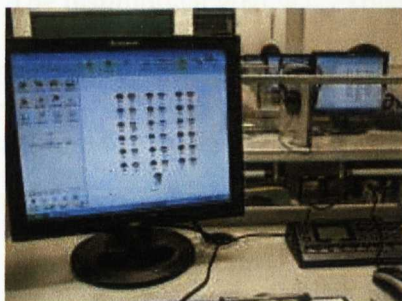


Figure 6.2 The 'New Class' management system

Since the Centre's Internet use is restricted to teaching sessions, students have to go to U4's computer centre or other on-campus sites for Internet access. They can either use the university's machines or their own laptops via a wireless connection. However, both methods are charged for. Alternatively they can obtain Internet access at their residence (Figure 6.3) by paying a service provider.



Figure 6.3 A student working with her laptop in her residence room (photo provided by a student)

6.3.3 Teacher-Student perceptions and interactions

6.3.3.1 Teachers' perceptions and practice

Conversations with teachers in the Centre revealed that they held broadly similar views about the goals and practices of English teaching, perhaps unsurprisingly, as they were from the same teaching-focused institution.

The institutional goal was explained thus by LQ, Deputy Head of the Centre: she and her colleagues believed that their priority was to enhance students' English language skills; culture was considered an added-on component as background knowledge (U4-FieldNote-LQ, 09/10/2008). Overall, the faculty did not consider that developing students' ICC was 'a hierarchical goal'. Rather, the development of integral language skills was a priority. CY, one of the informant teachers, acknowledged that cultural topics and comparisons were

always a good starting point for language teaching but believed that they should not be over-emphasised; personally, he would teach vocabulary in the text and explore the contextual use of words from a socio-cultural perspective (U4-INT-CY, 11/05/2009).

As they realised that the cultural notes in the textbooks were insufficient, teachers filled the gap by using audio-visual materials from courseware and digital learning resources. To encourage students to use those prescribed resources that were uploaded to the institutional intranet, faculty administrators believed that their offer of free online time on pre-paid cards was a great incentive to their students.

Concerning the use of the Internet for teaching, the teachers interviewed agreed unanimously that they used it to a considerable degree to search for online materials for lesson preparation, in order to update their teaching about the cultural topics in the texts. Some teachers encouraged their students to use online learning materials outside class. For example, they recommended using the BBC online English learning resources, which they considered authentic and informative. However, such a practice was not properly built into lesson plans, which would, otherwise, be 'less manageable' (U4-INT-LXP, 10/10/2008) due to the workload involved in material selection and adaptation. For instance, LXP found online resources to be of 'little or no use', which was representative of her colleagues. She believed that it would be unwise to engage in direct use of the Internet in class without preparation work:

'About the use of the Internet, I think, for teaching, a lot of it takes place not inside the class but outside of the class. The direct use of the Internet (like playing a movie or read[ing] an online article) takes up a very minor part in the teaching. The direct use of the Internet seems to be very raw, you see, for

example, when I haven't done enough work to make the online material into the word file or PPT ahead of the class, I will have to search it in class. That is actually a very bad practice: How about there is a computer failure [failure]? How about you can't find the right thing?'

U4-DOC/Email-LXP, 03/06/2009 (square brackets added)

CY (U4-INT-CY, 11/05/2009) revealed that in language labs, although student machines were Internet-connected, teachers seldom allowed their students to log on to the Internet. This practice was largely due to the fact that time was limited for online work in class and there was no guarantee that students would follow up instruction strictly.

Teachers also felt that their students were 'more capable' (U4-INT-CY, 11/05/2009) than themselves in the use of Internet resources, which would encourage students to take initiatives for autonomous learning. They believed that students had their own ways of using online resources, including finding learning materials and sharing learning experiences with their friends via networking. In order to learn about their students' concerns, some teachers chose to observe their students' online community without intervention. They would, as CY claimed, expect to enrich the class with meaningful discussions by addressing students' real concerns that emerged in their online communities. Although many teachers had means of online communication such as emailing, blogging, and group chatting, most of them explained that they often chose to show their IDs as 'offline'. In particular women teachers with family duties could not afford much time to be with their students in their spare time; chatting with each student online would be 'very time-consuming' (U4-FieldNote-LXP, 03/06/2009). Also some teachers thought that they needed to keep a distance with the class, even in an online context (U4-INT-CY,

11/05/2009). They thought too that their online presence would potentially interfere with interactions between students. It would seem ‘embarrassing’ if students saw their teacher’s presence without communicating with him or her.

6.3.3.2 Students’ perceptions

Students from the Centre in general believed that they had an advantage over conventional university peers in learning English in this multicultural environment. They claimed they had intercultural communication with international students as friends and language partners, but they realised that such communication was mainly for socialising, without much systematic learning. They also thought that opportunities for practising English with overseas teachers were limited in class. Outside the classroom, communication with their overseas teachers was rare. Occasionally some teachers would send the students reading material, through the class email boxes. In other language classes, teachers of Chinese focused on language skills, vocabulary and grammar teaching, as well as cultural knowledge. Students thought their main goal was to command good language proficiency and they regarded their teachers as being very knowledgeable and informative as sources of language and culture input. They felt that they were accustomed to the teachers’ ways of teaching, which generally focused on imparting knowledge.

Most students had experience in using information and communication tools, although mainly for message delivery and socialising. Occasionally they would search online information in order to complete a prescribed presentation. They seldom used communication tools to keep in contact with their international friends as they preferred face-to-face contact (U4-INT-GF, 11/05/2009). They explained that class email accounts were rarely checked unless teachers instructed them to check and read when a document was delivered (U4-INT-KC, 14/05/2009) Although they approved of the Centre’s offer of

pre-paid cards, many of them chose to pay monthly for a contracted Internet service at their residence rather than going to the university computer rooms for Internet use. They regretted that the university machines were slow and out of date.

6.3.3.3 Snapshot 1 – Unit 11 of An Integrated English Course (Book 2)

- *Course materials*

The textbook, *An Integrated English Course*, is a popular series for English major students. Compiled by Chinese scholars, the majority of the texts were excerpted from textbooks, journals, magazines and other reading materials written by English and American authors since the 1970s. Except for some abridgements, most texts were unedited. The textbooks are theme-based rather than grammar/function-based, to enable students to communicate around the theme both in oral and written presentations. Each textbook comprises 16 units, covering two texts and a range of exercises, as Table 6.3 shows (also see Figure 5.1). In addition to the print version, the affiliated CD-ROM provides digital materials, which include some audio-visual resources such as film clips audio recordings. The electronic content contains five sections as Table 6.4 shows.

| Text 1 <i>Letter to a B Student</i> | Text 2 <i>College Pressures</i> |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. Pre-reading questions | 12. Text (Notes) |
| 2. Text (Words and Expressions, and Notes) | 13. Questions for discussion |
| 3. Text comprehension | <i>Memorable Quotes</i> |
| 4. Structural analysis of the text | |
| 5. Vocabulary exercises | |
| 6. Grammar exercises | |
| 7. Translation exercises | |
| 8. Exercises for integrated skills | |
| 9. Oral activities | |
| 10. Writing practice | |
| 11. Listening exercises | |

Table 6.3 Structure of the print version of Unit11

| Sections | Content |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 1. Pre-reading Activities | Read aloud Film clip (American Beauty) |
| 2. Global Reading | Text analysis (Text 1) Structural analysis Cultural background |
| 3. Detailed Reading | Paragraph by paragraph with audio clips |
| 4. Consolidation Activities | Vocabulary analysis Grammar exercises Translation exercises Exercises for integrated skills Oral activities Writing practice Listening exercises |
| 5. Further Enhancement | Lead-in questions Supplementary reading (Text 2) Memorable quotes |

Table 6.4 Structure of the digital version of Unit 11

In practice, neither the textbook nor the electronic resource is fully covered, due to the limited time allocated to each unit (6 hours per week, including 2 hours for listening). Many teachers reduce the content to vocabulary teaching and textual analysis of Text 1 in class, using either their own PowerPoint slides or a combination of their own materials with the courseware. Students, on the other hand, are requested to preview the new vocabulary and text and to complete the exercises in the textbook after class. The following example of CY's teaching of Unit 11 can be regarded as representative of the Centre's practice.

- **Procedure**

CY prepared 53 PowerPoint slides (Table 6.5) as a teaching plan for Text 1 *Letter to a B Student*. Excluding the title page, he allocated one slide to pre-reading questions as a warm up exercise at the start and another one to assignments (listening and writing) at the end. Slides containing cultural notes took up one quarter of a total 52, mainly clustered at the beginning with a few occasionally in between later slides. The other

three-quarters of the slides were for vocabulary (27), rhetorical features (5), textual analysis (4) and grammar (1). Among cultural slides, most carried textual information edited from the Internet, with some graphics and photos. One link directly connected to the website of a US university.

| Slides (%) | Slide content (S) |
|----------------------------|--|
| Cultural notes (25.00) | S1: About the author: Robert Oliphant S2: California State University, Northridge (URL) S3: The grading system in America S4, 5, 6: Grades and G.P.A. explanation S7: Zero-Sum game S8, 9: Vincent Thomas Lombardi and his quotes S13: Gentleman's C S23: 7 Deadly Sins S33: GI-Bill and GIs S35: Common military ranks |
| Vocabulary (51.92) | Explanation and exemplar sentences |
| Rhetorical features (9.62) | Explanation and exemplar sentences |
| Textual analysis (7.69) | Structure and meanings |
| Pre/Post-activities (3.85) | Instruction |
| Grammar (1.92) | Explanation |

Table 6.5 A summary of CY's PowerPoint slides

As was the case with other classes, the majority of the students in CY's class had done some preview work before they attended the class. They read through the vocabulary list and made notes by consulting print or electronic dictionaries. When asked about their use of online dictionaries or thesauruses, and search engines, none of them said they felt the need to do so because they knew that the teacher would explain in detail.

In class, as a warm-up exercise, CY spent a few minutes on the pre-reading questions, inviting students to give their own opinions. Next he explained the cultural notes in his PowerPoint slides, to introduce the background of Robert Oliphant. All the texts were pre-edited in his slides and he also provided a web link to the university where the author was based. He then clicked open to display the university's home page for the

class for a few seconds. Shifting back to the slides, he explained the grading system in the US, and the method of calculation, by demonstrating a chart from the Internet (without showing the original source). Then he moved on to explain another term, 'zero-sum game', which appeared in the text and was considered new to his class. Following that he also introduced Vincent Lombardi, a famous figure remembered for his American football coaching career and his quotes.

When it came to Text 1, he first presented a slide charting the organisation of the text. Then he switched to the courseware slides which presented paragraphs accompanied by audio recordings. He played the audio clips while students listened, and followed by this with his own slides which highlighted the key words and phrases in terms of meaning and usage. Frequently the students were asked in turn to answer his questions or to make sentences by using the words and phrases that had just been taught. This process continued until the text was finished.

Throughout, I observed that except for the demonstration of an American university homepage at the start, there was no use of the Internet. For a time, when teaching the new word 'gear', CY noticed that most students were not clear about the meaning despite his verbal illustration. Some students suggested that CY run an online search immediately since the computer was nearby. But CY thought for a second and suggested they try by themselves later if they wanted.

After class in a short conversation, CY explained that he used to use images from the Internet to help students visualise the words if necessary, and he thought the Internet was helpful in this regard. But now he would rarely do such 'an unprepared online search' in class as he felt it not worthwhile, considering that he had little time in which to complete

the whole text. The only web page he showed was used to raise the students' awareness of searching for relevant information from the Internet. He believed that his students should be able to do this for themselves (U4-InfINT-CY, 12/05/2010).

From this snapshot, it was clear that CY prioritised his teaching around the language points, with some cultural notes in class. It also suggested that he adopted the knowledge transmission method which takes culture as facts and figures. In observation of his use of the 'Cultural Background' slide (Figure 6.4) ('American Education System Versus Asian Education System'), there was no evidence of which original resources were used to produce this cultural note in the PPT. The tone of the language also sounded over-generalised and stereotypical, for example the statement that 'People in America like to be free, to do whatever they want to do without any restrictions' (U4-DOC/PPT, 12/05/2010). However, this did not catch the class's attention and CY just read it to the class as it was.

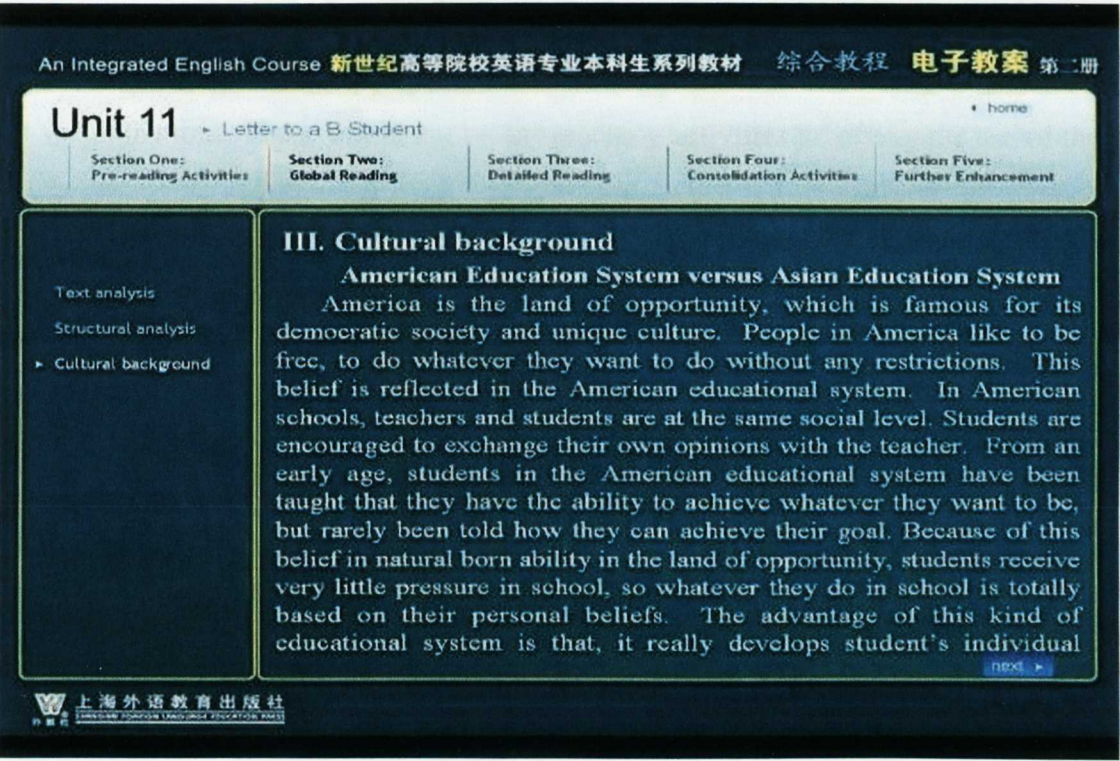


Figure 6.4 A screenshot of the Unit 11 courseware

Also, although in his interview (U4-INT-CY, 11/05/2009) CY acknowledged using student presentations, he did not engage in any during my observation. He added that due to constraints such as workload for both the teacher and students, such a method was infrequently adopted. In the teaching there was little direct use of Internet tools in class despite the availability of the Internet connection. However, according to him, use of the Internet for searching for materials, especially audio-visual ones, was essential to his students when preparing for their group presentations.

6.3.3.4 Snapshot 2 – A critical incident in discussing ‘Terrorism’

- ***Background***

LXP, who had been a visiting scholar in the USA for one year, thought that she was more active than her colleagues in using the Internet for teaching. She apologised for not being able to offer help with the observation of her class as previously planned due to her re-appointment as a tutor responsible for Year-2 students taking CET examinations. There would not be any teaching activities involving the use of the Internet in her class at all until some days before the end of my stay, when she would resume some teaching sessions. By then, a visiting group from an American institution would be observing her and her colleagues' classes. Therefore she offered me an alternative opportunity for observation. I managed to attend two sessions in which LXP started Unit 7 *Terrorism* in *New College English* (Book 4).

- ***Procedure***

LXP arrived at the designated multimedia classroom some time before the class for preparation work, including checking Internet connections, arranging seating for the two observers, and chatting with some of her students who had come early. While running the courseware she opened the home page of the Xiaonei social network on the

screen, logging on to her account and then scrolling down the page where her ‘Friends’ (students) were listed to check if there was any updated information. When the bell rang, she introduced the two observers to the class and started her class.

Referring to her Xiaonei community, LXP asked the class why they had not posted for a while. One voice said it was because of the examination preparation. Another added that they had nothing to write about except for their depressing experiences of study and examination. On hearing this, LXP joked that thanks to the class’s consideration she only read their happy stories but she would appreciate sharing their unhappy moments as well. Then she related this talk to the unit by saying that, unlike the class, the author of the text (*The Nightmare and the Dreams*) shared her sadness at the 9/11 terrorist attacks in a journal article. Volunteers were invited to tell the class some details of the event. At the same time, LXP switched to the courseware interface which showed the text, with the background information in a pop-up box (Figure 6.5).

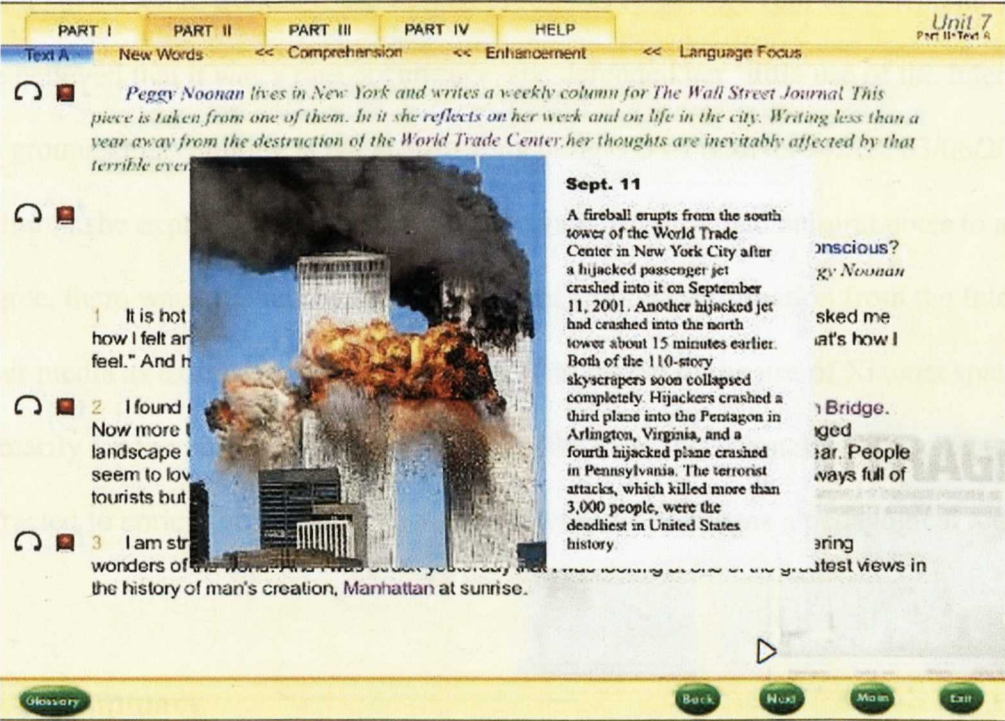


Figure 6.5 A screenshot of Unit 7 Terrorism

Some students were then asked about their personal feelings about the event. While the students generally condemned the terrorists, one male student regarded the terrorists as brave people though he did not agree with the plot. He attributed the terrorist attack to US hegemony. This opinion silenced the class for a short while until LXP intervened. The discussion was abandoned and the class began with text analysis and vocabulary learning, the content of which was available from the courseware. From time to time, students were asked to give examples of sentences made with the words and phrases just taught, until the bell rang.

In a conversation with LXP after class, she admitted the embarrassing moment when hearing an unexpected opinion, especially in front of the American visitor. She feared it would cause a political problem. She felt lucky because there was only verbal evidence of this, restricted to the class. However, she imagined that if the discussion had been carried out online in a forum or a weblog, even in the Xiaonei, both the teacher and the student could have been in trouble if the written proof was released. From this incident, although she believed that it was a rare occurrence, she defended her 'little use of the Internet' on the grounds that 'nothing is better than something' (U4-FieldNote-LXP, 03/06/2009). In addition, she explained that since the courseware had provided cultural notes to a large degree, there was little reason to search for background information from the Internet or other media as external input for teaching. With regard to the use of Xiaonei space it was primarily for the purpose of networking with the class, occasionally with some topics being extracted to enrich the class discussion, but it was by no means a pedagogical tool.

6.3.4 Summary

This case, despite insufficient observations of both classroom teaching and student self-study, has revealed influences on the institutional contexts of language teaching and

learning, and the use of the Internet. These characteristics can be summarised in the following points:

- The Centre is an independent teaching unit within a multicultural environment in U4.
- Non-English majors from a number of disciplines follow the English-major curriculum and examination requirements.
- The conventional teaching method is knowledge-intensive transfer with questions and answers between teachers and students.
- Despite Internet-connected classrooms, Internet use is minimised in class; students have no access to multimedia classrooms after class.
- Pre-paid cards for computer network use are offered by the Centre but are little used.
- Students have class email accounts for receiving information from their teachers and/or online networking, but little pedagogical use is made of them.

The Centre shares the multicultural environment in U4, in which students have opportunities for intercultural exchange, e.g. through the common practice of having a language partner. However, developing intercultural communicative competence does not appear as an important institutional goal. Instead, the Centre emphasises the importance of improving students' integrated skills and awareness of cross-cultural communication, the latter reduced to teaching culture as background knowledge. The Centre's priority is that non-English major students from a number of disciplines should complete the curriculum for English majors in the first two years of their bachelor course. This target has raised many students' motivation for language learning.

Pedagogically, the Integrated English course and College English course are the two core components of the curricula. Classroom instruction is predominantly teacher-centred and

language knowledge-focused, with occasional student discussion and group presentation. Teachers believe that good English language skills are the main goal, which seems identical to students' perceptions. The course is highly structured by the textbooks and affiliated courseware. The interaction between teachers and students takes the form of questions and answers in class and through emailing and social networking after class. Technically, the Centre has invested in courseware and a digital learning system which is accessible on campus. Students are encouraged to undertake autonomous learning by making use of these resources with pre-paid cards for free hours. However, the take-up is lower than expected. Although classrooms are generally equipped with Internet-connected computers, students do not have direct Internet access. Internet tools are seldom directly used in class, due to lack of time and to pedagogical considerations. Rather, Internet resources are consulted and tailored by teachers in the course of preparing lesson plans, and the limited display of online information is used as a trigger to arouse students' interest.

6.4 Case 2–U22 Business English and intercultural wiki

6.4.1 Background

ZB is a tutor of English at the English Language Centre (ELC) of U22. With a PhD from a British university, he is one of the few Chinese staff in ELC, in which international tutors outnumber Chinese ones.

At a conference in Shanghai in November 2008 I approached ZB with my plans for fieldwork, after I learned that he was piloting an intercultural wiki platform for his students and for learners of Chinese from two British universities. He forwarded my request, with the informed consent letter, to the Associate Dean, RZL. After a follow-up face-to-face meeting with RZL, my proposal was accepted on the condition that the institution's name

and its staff were kept strictly anonymous; access to classroom observation was denied and access to interviewing was limited to students and Chinese staff only. The general reason for this measure, according to RZL was that the institution saw itself as still at ‘an infant age’ and did not want to be ‘outgrown’ by its competitors.

While the main interviews were conducted with RZL and ZB, there was an informal one with ZW, a Chinese academic teaching assistant who was responsible for student club events. She agreed to provide some information about students’ extracurricular activities but insisted on not being audio-recorded. Interviews with the students were organised either individually or in pairs. Observations were made randomly at the main study lounge and some computer clusters. While some key institutional documents were confidential, and therefore unavailable, copies of course materials and handouts were obtained (Table 6.6).

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| Institution | U22, International Partnership | Case | English Language Centre (ELC) |
| Teacher | ZB, RZL, ZW | Duration | 16/02-16/03/09 |
| Student | Y1/2 non-English majors, EAP/ESP | Data source | Observations (random), documents, interviews |

Table 6.6 Summary of the key information of Case 2

6.4.2 The context

U22 is an officially-recognised partnership between a Chinese university and a British counterpart. Both are strong in research and the teaching of science, engineering and management. Unlike conventional state-owned universities in China, U22 has a vision to ‘become a research-led international university in China and a Chinese university recognized internationally, with unique features in teaching and learning, research, social service, education and management philosophy’ (U22-DOC/Intro, 08/02/2009). It aims to

‘train and equip its graduates with the skills and knowledge that are required for the international calibre of management and technology, including a good command of English, a high level of creativity, an enthusiasm for working both independently and in a team, a sound understanding of their chosen subject, and the acquisition of career-related specialised knowledge and values’ (ibid.).

U22 recruits students from overseas and locally to study side-by-side in all classes, but so far students from China make up the main part of the student body. Although this institution focuses on science and technology, English is the medium of instruction, which puts a high demand on students’ language proficiency at the start. All students in the first two years of their degree programmes must study English modules delivered by the ELC. The language modules focus on English for Academic Purposes (EAP). Students are encouraged to be active learners, particularly through group and project work, so that they improve their team work, discussion and study skills. In the first year students go through ‘general English’ to raise their awareness of and competence in different forms of academic English including lectures, small class groups, tutorials, presentations, research projects and essay writing. A distinctive feature of U22 is that each member of the academic staff acts as academic tutor or supervisor to a group of students so that students are guaranteed extended opportunities for support from staff, following a negotiated schedule. Tutors work in small teams to develop course materials and prepare teaching plans, although each tutor enjoys flexibility under a negotiated framework. Lectures and follow-up tutorials are set to weekly schedules.

In addition to face-to-face communication, students are encouraged to use the intranet, a Moodle-supported virtual environment called Interactive Communication Environment (ICE), for information delivery and sharing, and extended communication among

themselves and with their tutors. The ICE (Figure 6.6) is password-protected and all the students and teachers are required to use institutional email accounts for registration and personal communication.

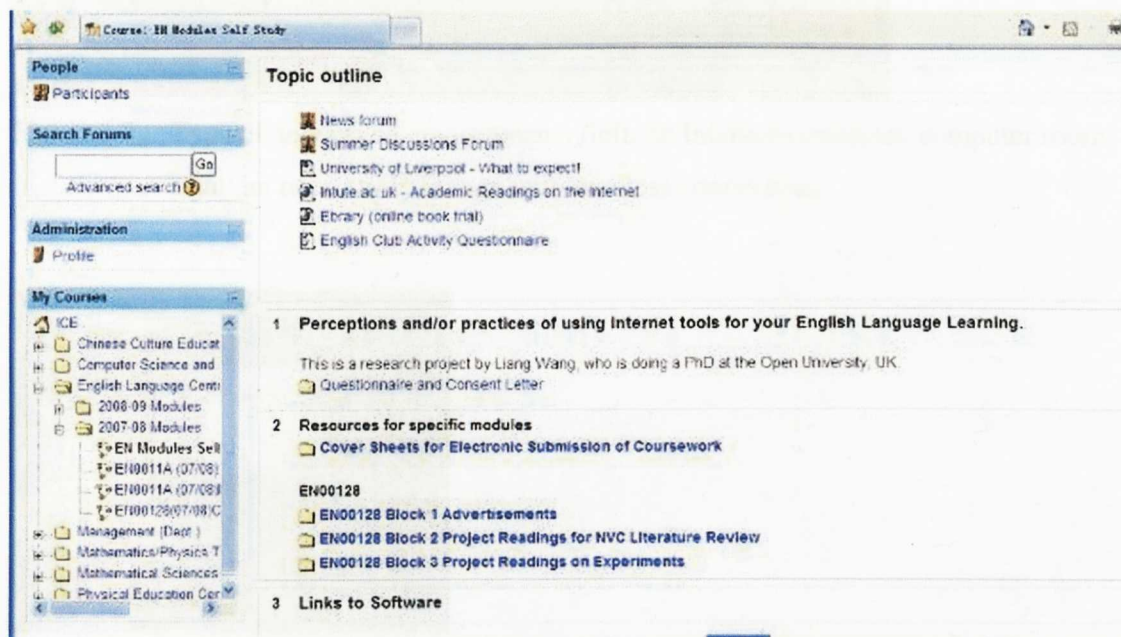


Figure 6.6 The ICE intranet interface (with my consent letter included)

While staff members have individual offices equipped with Internet-connected computers, the university has set up both networked computer rooms and wireless connections in the building so that students can log on to the university computers or to their own laptops (Figure 6.7). This provision offers students convenient access to and frequent use of the Internet/intranet. As the cost of Internet use is covered by student tuition fees, Internet use while a registered student at the university is free and the use of the service is unlimited. Additionally, students can choose to log on to the network in their residence at their own cost (Figure 6.8). They thus have flexibility to choose places to work during the daytime and continue their work after 10 pm when the campus building is closed. Hence, they find it convenient to have Internet access at their accommodation.

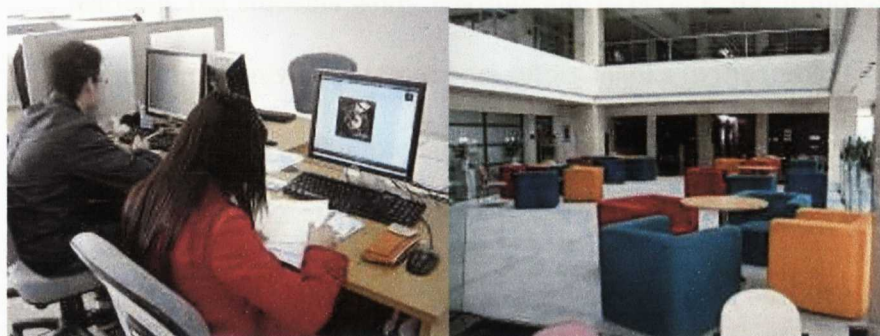


Figure 6.7 Typical networked environments (left: an Internet-connected computer room; right: an open study lounge with wireless connection)

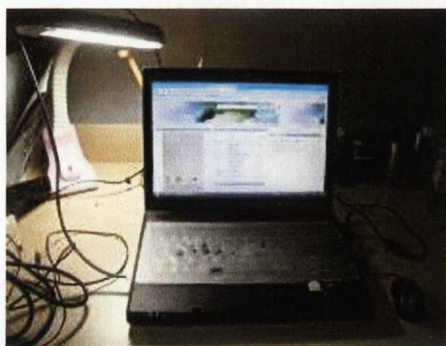


Figure 6.8 A student's laptop in shared accommodation with Internet access (photo taken by an informant student)

6.4.3 Teacher-Student perceptions and interactions

6.4.3.1 Teachers' perceptions and practice

- *RZL's account*

In explaining the goal of the institution, RZL emphasised that ELC differed from other local universities in that it aimed to help students learn about not only 'general English', but also academic English and study skills, including writing essays, writing course work, giving presentations, discussing, and making notes while listening to lectures. According to him, these practical skills were essential to lead students into academic study in their specific disciplinary modules. RZL acknowledged that the intercultural dimension in language teaching was not officially recorded as a goal of teaching and

learning, but students were ‘learning and experiencing’ it through everyday communication with international tutors thanks to the university’s unique international background. He highlighted the fact that:

‘[students] talk to the tutors, that involves a lot of things like the way to approach the tutors, how to write appropriate emails, this kind of, all kind of communication skills when [they] communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds.

[...]

The students studying in other universities in China do not have this kind of real-life intercultural experience so for them they need to be taught about what intercultural communication is and what kind of problems or issues in relation to it. But our students are experiencing it, so that is something different...’

U22-INT-RZL, 05/03/2009

RZL also emphasised that his students could communicate with international students, a small but growing body in the university, thanks to their partner institution’s placement or exchange programmes. He claimed that the setting and channels for communication were made intercultural and that this should facilitate students’ development of ICC even without specific programmes for intercultural communication. In his opinion, ‘intercultural communication is part of the experience [...] not something that needs to be taught all the time’. In addition, he acknowledged that Chinese staff, including himself, also played an important role as they understood Chinese students’ needs and learning problems better than their international colleagues.

RZL acknowledged that he and his colleagues made great use of online resources for preparing teaching materials, including news reports and videos from English media like The Financial Times, the Economist, the BBC and CNN. Instead of following a textbook, he and his colleagues would adapt and develop materials that were relevant to the topics for teaching activities. For example, he recalled the time when the global financial crisis broke out:

‘we produced materials on [the] current economic crisis, and then we produced a whole set of reading materials, and also found news report and videos – so that you don’t have to download, we just play – all the computers in classrooms are linked to the Internet. So we just [...] started with playing the video [...] and news report [...] and then give them a chance to discuss, to give them articles to read, and then again discuss, then ask them to write an essay.’

U22-INT-RZL, 05/03/2009

In addition to searching materials from well-established websites, RZL also emphasised the use of ICE as a notice board for disseminating information such as the instructions and deadlines for students’ assignments. While this sounded like one-way communication, he explained that students were encouraged to ask questions through ICE as well as using web email to contact their tutors individually. In his view, the allocation of university domain-based email accounts for all students to use as a way of communicating made it a salient feature compared with what was available to students and staff in other universities.

- *ZB's account*

In his interview, ZB's answer was consistent with that of RZL: they shared the same institutional perspective and practice to a large degree. ZB lectured on two courses, business English and academic English, both of which used materials from British resources. He explained that in business English, students not only needed to learn language skills, but also to do 'real' case studies in different cultural settings. Students were expected to identify and understand various problems that a real company might encounter, and discuss them within culture-specific contexts to provide possible solutions. In one of his examples he illustrated a simulation task in the following words:

'in the unit of e-commerce, students would learn how to do e-commerce and how to buy something and sell their stuff on the Internet. Then I designed a worksheet to ask students to get onto the Internet to buy something. I gave students some budget, for example, £300, to buy something from the Internet. Students may buy some laptops or TV sets, etc. And I also asked them to book a holiday – gave students £500 budget – to book holiday online [...] if you have £500, and you are going to travel in London, and in order to spend the £500, where you can stay? Where you can go? Which restaurant and hotel, etc.'

U22-INT-ZB, 29/02/2009

To save students' time to search online, ZB recommended particular websites to look at, rather than asking them to search by themselves. As far as engaging students to use the Internet, he proposed that after group work they could be asked to 'upload their findings and solutions on to the internal website, to show other students' (ibid.).

In using textbooks and Teacher's Guide books, while some background information and cultural notes were provided, he often suggested that his students should further explore the target websites. However, he revealed that he seldom used online English materials from Chinese English media, as he (as well as his international team mates) thought that the language used in these materials was inauthentic. Only on a few occasions did his team use English materials from Chinese media, for the purposes of comparison. In the EAP course, ZB introduced the UK academic writing standard to his students, who were unfamiliar with it but needed to conform to it.

Apart from curriculum-based teaching, ZB was also piloting online collaboration through establishing a wiki platform between students in ELC and students learning Chinese in two UK universities, with which he had personal connections. Taking his students' need to study abroad in the near future into account, he believed that the Internet should play a more important role, helping learners to exchange languages and cultures rather than just search for information. Together with a UK collaborator, he created an online site on Wikispaces.com for students on both sides to communicate on cultural topics like food, pop music and travel. Since the purpose of the extracurricular activity was to provide a social atmosphere with intercultural exchange, to develop autonomous learning and collaboration by making use of the Wikis, he did not prepare learning materials and tasks. This approach, however, was less satisfactory as students' interest soon waned because both sides were waiting for the other side to take a more active role. ZB also found it time-consuming to moderate the activity all the time in addition to his official workload.

- ***ZW's account***

ZW, a junior staff member in ELC, undertook the role of looking after a range of English clubs initiated by students, in addition to her regular teaching job. According to ZW, although these clubs belonged to extracurricular activities, some international faculty offered themselves as club consultants to facilitate the events, all of which took place face-to-face. This form of extracurricular activity allowed more opportunities for some students (mainly club members) to experience language use in an intercultural setting. However, such external input from voluntary staff was not always guaranteed (for example, staff might be away on business or absent through sickness). ZW admitted that, within her scheduled timetable, she spent a lot of time making arrangements and meeting students face-to-face to discuss club activities. She suggested that the Internet could have been an effective tool for connecting her with different club chairs and members to get things done online. She also considered the feasibility of asking the clubs to publish their activities in the form of reports in English, with photos, on the intranet, so that they could possibly attract more members. However, she insisted that the idea be discussed by the administrative committee first. She was also worried about the practical workload both for her students and herself as a coordinator if this proposal were approved.

6.4.3.2 Students' perceptions

Student interviewees were generally Year 1 and 2 majors of electronic engineering, business and finance, and information science. Their views about the university as a whole were positive in terms of the international learning atmosphere and technical support. Many students affirmed that it was 'worthwhile' being enrolled in U22, because they had more opportunity for contact with international staff than in other universities, despite the much higher tuition fees. They liked the way that the university adopted the British

educational system, which would prepare them for their future study in the UK. In particular, the dual tutoring system, i.e. each student has an academic tutor and a personal tutor, made them feel that this educational culture was 'significantly different' from their previous experiences. Some students mentioned that they were 'quite happy' to run into their tutors (international) for informal communication on campus and in communal areas like gyms and restaurants since overseas staff lived in nearby apartments.

Students had little knowledge of the concept of intercultural communicative competence, but when probed, they regarded it as an ability to understand 'what the international tutors said' and to 'express their own ideas clearly before the tutors' (e.g. U22-INT-CDD, 13/03/2009), in addition to developing their cultural knowledge about a foreign country (mainly the UK). They also joined in clubs such as drama, film appreciation and debating societies in order to practise their spoken English and experience UK culture (e.g. U22-GINT-C&T, 03/03/2009). By contrast, some of them revealed that their international tutors, including Chinese tutors, were not interested in talking about Chinese cultures in class, and the Chinese media in English (e.g. China Daily) were considered less authentic.

Whereas some non-language disciplines like Chinese revolutionary history and politics were available, students felt that these were 'not meaningful' since the content had been taught in their high schools already. They also commented that some local staff members were 'incompetent' to deliver non-language-focused courses in English. Despite using English as the vehicle for instruction and assignments, they felt that they had not had as many opportunities to practise the language as they had expected (U22-GINT-Z&Y, 27/02/2009). Therefore most of them showed a preference for native English-speaking staff as they had difficulty understanding the accents of other lecturers (e.g. Chinese, Indian, Malaysian) speaking English when they attended their own disciplinary courses.

By contrast, they contended that the ELC staff, including the Chinese ones, all spoke 'good' English, being 'passionate' in encouraging them to use English. Most of the interviewees planned to go abroad for a period of bachelor-level study ('2+2', i.e. two years in China and two years in the UK) or masters-level study ('4+1', i.e. four years in China and one year of masters study in the UK). Therefore, they were interested in the Commonwealth-oriented language examinations such as IELTS which they thought were practical and relevant to their study. Many of them felt 'lucky' because they did not need to take CET-4 and 6, the nation-wide English proficiency tests for non-English majors, which have been criticised for their focus on testing linguistic knowledge rather than language use.

Students were, overall, satisfied with the large number of computers and computer rooms supplied on every floor of the teaching building and wireless connection almost in every corner. They highly appreciated the convenience of using computers and Internet connection and chose to believe that it was 'free of charge'. The speed of connection was thought 'acceptable' except for occasional instability, and technical maintenance was rated 'consistent' and 'reliable'. The majority of the interviewees said that they also used their personal laptops both on campus and at their accommodation. Another aspect of technical support considered 'beneficial' was the provision of email accounts using the university domain. Students enjoyed the opportunity to build up their communal identity and reputation with the use of an 'official' email address for learning and communication.

Comparing with their friends attending conventional universities, they claimed their learning environment was 'an advantage'. In addition to the 'lecturing + tutorial' teaching mode, many of them stated that they had become accustomed to the teamwork mode, i.e. they would form groups of four to six outside class to discuss their projects and meet their

tutors as a group for a progress report. In class, they co-presented their work in the form of PowerPoint slides. In order to gather information and data, they were trained to use online information searching skills to find good resources and they subsequently found it essential to work in front of a computer screen in order to run searches whenever necessary. They were also reminded to read the notice board on the ICE intranet, and to check email communication from tutors or administrators. They affirmed that their tutors were 'very responsive' to their enquiries and questions, which encouraged them to continue to communicate. Some students, however, admitted that they themselves were 'not so communicative' and often 'did not know what to talk about' with their tutors. For study purposes, students listed search engines such as Google and Baidu as the top tools for use. YouTube and professional sites such as the BBC and The Financial Times were also often-visited sites under teachers' instruction. Some students said that they had registered on the external wiki site which ZB set up for intercultural exchange. However while agreeing that the intention to facilitate intercultural exchange was 'good', they felt that it was 'less interactive'. Subsequently they suspended their 'active participation' in it as there was neither 'direct interaction with British partners' nor a facilitator to mediate and maintain operation. Some admitted that they adopted a 'wait-and-see' attitude and expected 'the other side' of the wiki programme to set the ball rolling (e.g U22-GINT-Z&Y, 27/02/2009).

Nearly half of the interviewees (mostly '2+2' programme students) acknowledged that they also had constant email communication or QQ chat for advice on life and study from their seniors who had visited the UK, since they would travel there in the near future. A few students also visited other online forums specialising in study abroad. However, they said that they used only Chinese for communication rather than attempting to use English with international/English students in the UK for networking and socialising. They

established their own online communities mainly through Fetion Messenger, QQ Zone and Xiaonei Zone for information exchange and delivery.

Overall, almost all the students interviewed expressed their high degree of identification with the university and the ELC and their motivation to learn English was high. Since classroom observations were not possible, the interaction between students and teachers had to be sketched in, based on data from other sources like the informants' accounts, teaching material preparation and observation of students' out-of-class work.

To take ZB's course, Business English, for example, documents such as course materials were analysed in order to help understand interactions both within and after class, as discussed in Snapshot 1 below. In Snapshot 2, an informal observation of student group discussion for a project presentation will be illustrated.

6.4.3.3 Snapshot 1 – Tasks design of Unit 9 Raising Finance

- ***Course materials***

Textbooks, entitled *Experience English* (originally produced by Pearson-Longman in association with The Financial Times, now by Higher Education Press) were introduced to students. Each set of books consists of a course book (Figure 6.9), an exercise book, a book for listening-speaking practice and a Teacher's Guide, as well as affiliated audio-visual materials. One of the main strengths is that most of the texts in the course book are selected and edited from The Financial Times so as to ensure input of real language use. The sources of audio-visual materials vary, from film clips to excerpts from novels, as a supplement to the course book materials. According to its introduction, the course book features 1) real-life business contexts with rich and authentic materials; 2) experiential learning through role-play and case studies; 3) a

task-based approach integrating language and communication skills. All these features aim to enhance students’ communicative competence through personal experiences and opinions. The following section will look at Unit 9 for analysis in connection with some handouts.

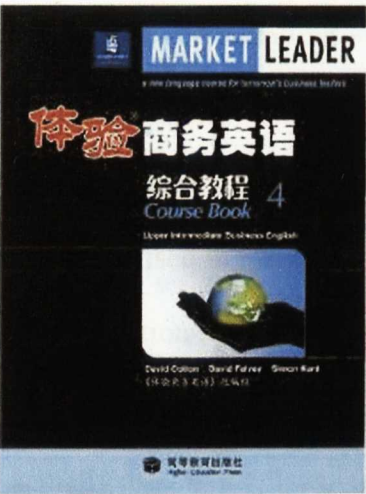


Figure 6.9 The cover of a course book

Unit 9 is composed of six main sections with a ‘Start-up’. The first four sections present language skills, vocabulary and grammar. The fifth one focuses on language function and the last part is a case study within the unit. Table 6.7 summaries the content of the textbook:

| Section | Content (original) |
|--------------------|--|
| Start-up | Questions for discussion (engaging with students’ personal opinions and perspectives) |
| 1. Listening | Ways of raising finance (an interview with a co-founder from the Internet business Flametree.com) |
| 2. Vocabulary | Financial terms (match and multiple choice) |
| 3. Reading | Financing start-up business (two undated articles from the Financial Times on raising finance in Japan and Italy respectively) |
| 4. Language review | Dependent propositions (collocation completion, blank fill-in and match) |
| 5. Skills | Negotiating (tips, skills, role play) |
| 6. Case study | Vision Film Company (group work, writing) |

Table 6.7 - Structure and content of Unit 9

Clearly, the unit is predominantly language skills-focused. Cultural elements are embedded in the Start-up discussion, as background in the two reading articles (Section 3 Reading) and in the negotiation tips (Section 5 Skills). The first example of embedded cultural elements occurs in the 'Start-up' when the Teacher's Guide suggests explaining the expression 'loan shark' and asking about students' own cultural perspectives on situations such as having an 'overdraft'. With reference to the second example, in Section 3 students are given contextualised information about the target countries when they discuss articles about raising finance; the information is then re-contextualised in their home country, as suggested by the Teacher's Guide. In Section 5 (negotiation tips), teachers are reminded to give culturally-dependent explanations. Throughout the unit, there is only one place (Section 1) that refers to a website which is actually used in the listening exercise as evidence of authentic material.

- ***Re-design of materials***

Self-contained as the textbook is, not all the sections were used in instruction. As a routine, ZB and his colleagues together created a flexible plan by using up-to-date online resources, such as YouTube clips, to replace content considered less 'suitable' or 'attractive'.

In this unit, a handout to introduce basic negotiation language was added in the language skills section and an additional handout was created for the listening and note-taking section, with audio-visual resources from YouTube. The textbook-based case study was replaced by a current British TV programme called Dragon's Den, with a link from YouTube. Table 6.8 illustrates the revised structure of Unit 9.

| Section | Content (revised) |
|------------------------------|--|
| Start-up | Questions for discussion (engaging with students' personal opinions and perspectives) |
| 1. Listening and Note-taking | Ways of raising finance (an interview with a co-founder from the Internet business Flametree.com) Lecture on financial crisis 2008 (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D9eYVZLzwE) PM's Question Time (Brown v Cameron, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZlrOTYGsw8 and Blair v Cameron, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpVycRpa2L8) |
| 2. Vocabulary | Financial terms (match and multiple choice) |
| 3. Reading | Financing start-up business (two undated articles from the Financial Times on raising finance in Japan and Italy respectively) |
| 4. Language review | Dependent propositions (collocation completion, blank fill-in and match) |
| 5. Skills | Negotiating (tips, skills, role play) Function and language points |
| 6. Case study | Dragon's Den (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nE6tTMDgEdA&NR=1) Dragon's Den Case: iTeddy (http://www.iteddy.com ; http://www.ipa.gov.uk/) |

Table 6.8 Structure and content of Unit 9 after revision (in bold)

According to ZB the purpose of using online audio-visual resources for listening practice was twofold. Firstly, faculty always endeavoured to ensure that language input was authentic and that content was relevant. For example, they used Prime Minister's Question Time to show political life in Britain. Since most students would further their study in the UK, such 'vivid input' was considered to be conducive to an understanding of the target culture. Secondly, teachers thought that since students all had a copy of the textbook-based CD-ROM (some even had a copy of the Teacher's Guide which can be purchased in bookstores) they could practise listening after class. In class, teachers hoped to use materials new to students so that they had to concentrate by taking notes while listening/watching.

An examination of the handouts shows that the tasks and instruction were made explicit. The first task addressed the much talked-about financial crisis, and provided a

YouTube video link. Handouts were prepared, listing the main topics and requesting students to note key words to fill in the gaps in the texts. In Task 2 pair work was followed by an oral summary of the lecture based on each pair's notes, then reported to the class. Task 3, Prime Minister's Question Time, started with a new YouTube video link and some photographs of political faces and a place, i.e. Gordon Brown, David Cameron and the Houses of Parliament respectively. There were also brief texts to explain the background of the events in the video. In the pre-listening task, students were asked to discuss their predictions of how David Cameron would ask questions, how Gordon Brown would respond and how the audience would react to the debate. After discussion they watched and made notes on what really happened. This activity, simple as it is, includes elements that may enable students to make assumptions from their own cultural perspectives, to observe the events and to test the assumptions in the authentic cultural context as presented. The second subtask suggested replaying the video in order to attend to students' comprehension of the debate and included eight questions from factual recall to exploration of perspectives.

With regard to Task 6, Dragon's Den was considered more relevant than the original case about film production in the textbook (Table 6.7). Before the Dragon's Den case was analysed, an information match exercise was prepared to help students understand the background of the programme Dragon's Den and the 'Dragons', based on the first section of the video clip from the YouTube link. The second subtask was note-taking and 'true or false' judgement. The third subtask was pair discussion, encouraging students to give their personal opinions on the proposed investment. The case material was supplemented by two website links which helped students explore more information (the product website) and professional knowledge (the UK government's intellectual property website).

A review of the course materials shows that while teaching content is adaptable and flexible, the teaching plan is highly structured to ensure a good use of both textbook-based materials and online resources in class.

6.3.3.4 Snapshot 2 – Students’ group work for preparing a presentation

During fieldwork in U22, I often saw groups of students working in the study lounge area (Figure 6.7-right), sitting at round tables, often with one or two laptops on the tables.

Without distracting them from their discussions, I gathered some data through non-participant observation. The following account is such an example.

On March 3rd 2009 a group of five students set up a laptop on a table near to mine. While waiting for the laptop to power up, they took out documents and writing pads, chatting as they did so. The working language was Chinese throughout the discussion, with occasional use of English words. Below, students are coded A to E.

Students were working on a project surveying university students’ use of two main search engines, Google and Baidu. They wanted to design a ‘good’ questionnaire in English for the target participants, to carry out a small-scale survey and to report their findings to the class. They started by talking about their own use of the two tools and reached a consensus that ‘Google was good for English resources and Baidu for Chinese ones’, which they said was very self-evident. Student A looked around and asked his fellows whether they had previous experience in designing a questionnaire. As nobody had, he suggested going over the handout for some ideas to talk about. After going through questionnaire construction tips for a while, Student B complained that their teacher only introduced the basics about writing question items, such as factual and attitudinal questions, open and closed types, etc.,

which still seemed a bit abstract to him. Student C comforted her group with the thought that there was one more tutorial session before the presentation so they still had time to consult the teacher; the important point was that they needed to work out something, for example, the overall questionnaire structure and some question items so that they would have something specific about which to consult their teacher.

Student D, while operating the laptop, suggested that they should simply search the Net for some existing sample questionnaires so that they could learn and adapt from them. Student B agreed with Student D but was uncertain whether any was available. Student D joked that they could try to use Google to search Baidu and vice versa. Student E disregarded this solution and agreed with Student C that they should pin down the main purpose of the questionnaire design and aspects they would like to investigate. She claimed that it would be 'aimless' to search just for the sake of searching. This opinion was adopted by Student A, who was also doing note-taking. Then the group began to focus on the purpose and scope of the questionnaire survey. In the course of brainstorming, questioning, arguing, disagreeing and agreeing, they used Chinese predominantly but this caused Student A a problem in translating his fellows' ideas from Chinese to English sufficiently fast. He repeatedly asked them for help with English expressions and asked Student D to use dictionary software to translate some words. So the rest slowed down and together constructed the wording of some questionnaire items in English.

Student D, on the other hand, asked the others to contribute ideas on using keywords to search effectively. From time to time he tried with various keywords, including Chinese and English. He realised that he was unable to check and read each hit but suggested that he would email the URLs to the group so that each could read some after returning to their accommodation. This was agreed by all. They then turned back to help Student A to

translate their Chinese ideas into English questions. Before they could finish everything, they had to negotiate another meeting time and went off to their respective classes as the afternoon sessions would start shortly.

This work group was only one among several others deploying this method: using the Internet as a means of gathering information. While the topic in this discussion was a comparison between Google and Baidu, students commonly used search engines to find resources, characteristically by using two languages. It was also noticeable that they chose to use their native language for communication, rather than the target language.

6.4.4 Summary

The case in U22 demonstrates a unique context in that it is one of the few international partnership universities located in China, which seems more attractive to Chinese students who have plans to study abroad. It has the following characteristics:

- The university adopts a British educational system, including teaching, tutoring and assessment, which is distinct from Chinese counterparts;
- The ELC is a unit that specialises in training in EAP and ESP;
- The ELC routinely uses the intranet to keep staff and students informed and to facilitate communication;
- The faculty team is composed mainly of international staff, with a minority Chinese staff group; both are considered to be enthusiastic and responsive in teaching and tutoring;
- Staff routinely work in teams to prepare teaching materials and use online multi-media resources, predominantly from British media;

- Most students are in favour of the new learning environment although a small number of them find it difficult to fit in;
- Students' motivation to learn English is high, driven by plans to study abroad;
- Students are satisfied with the technological infrastructures and technical support offered by the university;
- Students form the habit of using Internet tools, in particular email for communication and consultation with staff;
- Students show a negative response to using asynchronous communication tools such as forums and wikis for intercultural exchange;
- Some students have external networking with their peers and seniors in the UK, though communication is in Chinese;
- Students participate in different clubs to maximise their use of English and intercultural experience with their tutors.

Institutionally, the language programmes do not follow the national guidelines for Chinese tertiary foreign language education. However, the ELC sees intercultural communication as an everyday experience and assumes that students can acquire ICC through constant contact with international staff members in both formal teaching and extracurricular activities. Intercultural communicative competence seems an implicit goal but communication, both face-to-face and electronically, with international tutors allows students opportunities to develop intercultural communication skills. Students seem to regard international staff as the privileged guardians of intercultural communication in terms of linguistic and cultural input as well as academic principles. However experiencing intercultural communication in daily life does not guarantee that through natural interaction between non-native English students and (near-)native English teachers, the students can automatically adjust to the required discourse of academic study. Clearly,

students are required to adapt their cognitive and behavioural activities to UK academic writing conventions. It is also unsurprising that there is minimal concern about incorporating Chinese culture into language programmes in general. Hence, intercultural communication by experiential learning appears somewhat unbalanced and unsystematic.

The teachers' enthusiasm for preparing teaching material and the effort that they put into this activity is an advantage that is worth highlighting. The constant updating of teaching materials with Internet multimedia resources encourages students' interest in learning and using language in real contexts. Students feel that it is rewarding not only to participate in meaningful learning activities, but also to develop learning methods through using Internet technologies. It is also noticeable that students, although motivated by study abroad, have different attitudes toward the new educational environment, which is very different to their previous learning experiences. They show willingness to adapt to the new learning environment rather than following the traditional Chinese methods, but many find it challenging to make this shift as their study methods are still hindered by long-forged 'Chinese' practices. While the new learning environment offers space for students to develop learner autonomy, facilitation from the institution is paramount. In this case, students have support from several resources: the dual tutorial system, group learning conventions and extra-curricular activities, as well as the opportunities for communication and consultation that the technology affords them. However, internal communication between students and staff works much more effectively than communication among students for discussion and co-construction purposes. This is partly due to the lack of pedagogical guidelines and advice, and partly because of students' shyness and lack of initiative. There lies a potential to achieve online participation and intercultural communication by systematically and consistently organising extracurricular events, wiki activities and preparation for study abroad.

6.5 Case 3–U14 Google Groups-mediated Cultural Analysis of Film

6.5.1 Background

SK, an American scholar, started teaching for U14 in 1993 and has been Executive Director of the Intercultural Institute since 2007. He is fluent in Chinese and keen on promoting research in intercultural studies in China and Asia, and linking it to global contexts. Having met him previously at conferences, I contacted him before the first stage of fieldwork. When I asked to visit one of his colleagues, who had undertaken an international email writing project as I had discovered (through the literature survey), he apologised for her absence, due to her secondment elsewhere. With no other similar projects available, he recommended another colleague, CW, a very active user of Google Groups for communication with his students. Coincidentally, I had met CW at a conference in 2006.

CW, having worked for U14 since 2006, is an American who can communicate bilingually. He agreed to support my fieldwork but reminded me that there was no Internet-mediated learning in the class that I wished to observe. He explained that his teaching room had no Internet access, a common situation across the campus. Although he was not interested in probing the phenomenon, he realised that since all the Intercultural Communication programmes, except for his, taught on this campus were heavily theory-based, there was no great demand from his colleagues for using the Internet in class. Despite this inconvenience, outside the class he used Google Groups to maintain communication and discussion about the films they would watch as part of the course. The visits took place in April 2009, as negotiated.

The campus is located in a University Park far from the university’s urban headquarters. Daily, four coaches take staff and students to and from these two places, taking around two hours in each direction. Because of the distance and inconvenient transportation (during that period I was staying in U17, very far from U14), I only attended his class sessions and met some of the students for informal talks after class. It was difficult to stay there for more exploration as finding temporary accommodation was a problem.

Prior to the visit, the informed consent letters and questionnaires were delivered to the students, resulting in no replies to the questionnaire despite my subsequent reminders. The final stage of assignments and examination was not included due to my departure for the visit to U4. Therefore, data collected for discussion were from teacher interviews, student interviews, class and online observations, and document analysis, as Table 6.9 summarises.

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|---|
| Institution | U14, Language | Case | Intercultural Institute – <i>Cultural Analysis of Film</i> (optional) |
| Teacher | CW, lecturer | Duration | 01/04-30/04/09 |
| Student | Master-level language students | Data source | Observation, documents, interviews |

Table 6.9 Summary of the key information of Case 3

6.5.2 The context

The course, *Cultural Analysis of Film*, was one option out of 12 courses within the Intercultural Communication programme in the Intercultural Institute for master-level students across disciplines. The goal of the course was to promote reflection on reading cultural phenomena and visual media literacy. Specifically, it aimed to:

- introduce culturally significant films
- train students to understand the films and other media in context
- encourage students to develop empathy for other cultures

- practise critical thinking
- practise active film viewing
- practise analytical writing about media
- develop students' visual literacy and respect for the many dominant forms of visual media.

U14-DOC/IC-Overview, 25/03/2009

U14-DOC/CAF-Intro, 01/04/2009

Pursuing these objectives, the course alternated between film screenings, online posts and class time, including discussion, lecturing, presentations, and assignments. According to the course handouts (ibid.), screenings took place every other week and online posts were required before the next screening. At semester start, CW opened a Google Groups account (Figure 6.10) for the class and instructed his students to register online. Having done this, students could click on 'Discussions' and post under the related topic. Since the Internet was not available in class and posts were mainly essays for critical and reflective thinking, no time was spent in class reviewing online discussions.

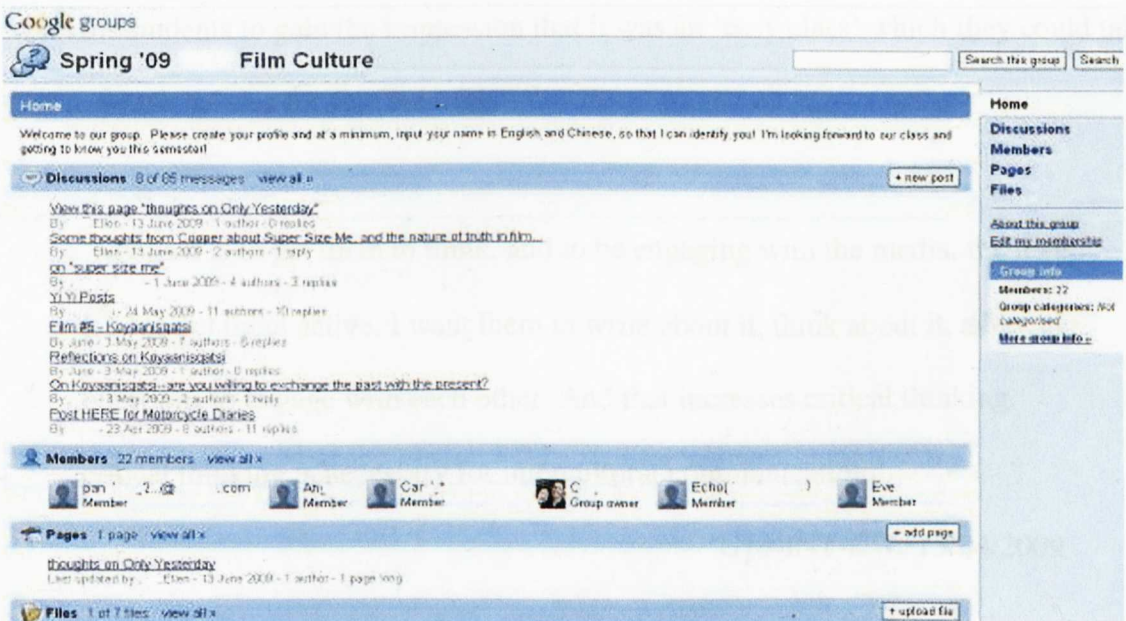


Figure 6.10 - The interface of the Google Groups for Film Culture

The textbook required was *Film as Social Practice* by Graham Turner, together with a recommended book translated into Chinese, which was available from a Chinese online book store. While assignment-reading and online posting had to be completed outside class, students' participation in lectures, presentations and discussions in class was mandatory.

6.5.3 Teacher-Student perceptions and interactions

6.5.3.1 Teacher's perceptions and practice

As a staff member of the Intercultural Institution, CW saw the development of intercultural communication and intercultural competence as a matter of students' personal development. In relation to his class, he thought one aspect of intercultural competence development was emotional response to film, which could give an opportunity for empathy. Learning about and reflecting on one's own culture was another aspect. He prepared films from different cultures, including two Chinese films which he hoped would give students 'new pictures of their own culture'. More importantly, as his class was optional, he did not want his students to gain the impression that it was an 'easy class' which they could take just to watch movies for fun. He said:

'My goal is to get them to think, and to be engaging with the media, the texts [...] to get them active. I want them to write about it, think about it, ask questions to engage with each other. And that increases critical thinking, critical thinking is necessary for intercultural communication.'

U14-INT-CW, 13/04/2009

Watching full length films was one of the main activities in class, in addition to lecturing, discussion and student presentation. CW acknowledged that in order to allow his students to react spontaneously to the films, he used the following strategy:

‘I don’t tell them the name of the film until the day because I don’t want them to go on the Internet to find a lot of reviews about the movie. I think they will be too influenced by that so I want them to see the movie fresh and then for the online talking and responding. I still don’t want them to read online. I want them to put their thoughts online. Then we come together for class, that’s when I ask them some questions – we try to look at the movie as a text itself and not what other people are saying about it.’

U14-INT-CW, *ibid.*

Clearly, CW was concerned about the importance of students’ development in independent thinking. In order to stimulate students’ attention and contribution, he manipulated the use of the resources (e.g. films used for teaching, Internet materials). From experience he knew that if the resources were revealed ahead of time, students would feel that ‘they had known the answers already and lose their curiosity and attention when it came to viewing and discussion’ (U14-INT-CW, *ibid.*).

Discussing Internet mediation, CW recalled, on the basis of his experiences with past students, that they had not seemed to use the Internet for learning. He claimed that their perception of doing searches had been ‘just to go to Google for some information’, without ‘much real learning, interacting with different people’ (U14-INT-CW, *ibid.*). In a subsequent informal talk (U14-FieldNote-CW, 20/04/2009), he revealed that he was doubtful of students’ ability to select, distinguish, synthesise and evaluate online materials.

He feared that they had little time for reading online materials carefully. He further worried that they had little time for thinking critically when reading online, compared with conventional book reading. He valued the traditional Chinese way of reading and reciting in order to enhance critical thinking. He claimed that there was a decline, brought about by educational fashion in America (and implicitly, its influence on China’s education) whereby students became over-reliant on the use of the Internet for knowledge while the memory function of the brain was deteriorating.

In the course descriptions prior to the start, CW made a checklist of ‘tips’ to help students develop active film viewing and visual literacy, as Table 6.10 summarises.

| Descriptive tips |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watching the entire film, including the credits, in order to learn more about the film and unravel the meaning with more time for reflection; • Taking notes to help remember specific aspects of culture which create either interest or confusion/misunderstanding, for later reflection and follow up; • Observing the effect of the visual and aural stimulation, and its relation to one’s personal experience; • Observing one’s affective response to the film and seeking to explain the possible reasons for it; • Paying attention to what is (or is not) being said, and how/why, and to non-verbal information, particularly the limited but carefully scripted dialogues; • Reducing stereotypical expectation of realism – learning to look for representations of culture through less realistic films; • Understanding the possible meanings of the film by contextualising it in both one’s own and another culture. |

Table 6.10 Checklist of tips (based on U14-DOC/CAF-Intro, 01/04/2009)

Assessment consisted of three film response papers (20 points each), three reading response papers (20 points each), one report on media deprivation (40 points), one presentation (20 points) and class participation (20 points), adding up to 200 points in total. Of relevance to this case analysis were the film response papers (in the form of online posts) and student presentations.

Not only did he instruct students how to sign in and post, but CW also specified the requirements as to the quality and quantity of the papers/posts. For the film response papers, students were required to write three ‘personal’ response essays, focusing on cultural issues relevant to the film, and their feelings, reactions and thoughts. Students were also requested to raise one question for the group to discuss and debate. He reminded students that they ‘**SHOULD NOT** go online and read reviews or critiques of the films’ (U14-DOC/CAF-Intro, 01/04/2009, capitalisation original) before writing their reflection paper. Instead, he would provide some basic information about the films and he himself would reply to questions via email or the online discussion site. The papers should be handed in to CW in duplicate and posted online at the Google Groups site. The students’ online posts would be read by their peers for further interaction. This requirement was interpreted by CW as ‘**a key aspect of learning through multi-media**’ (ibid., bold original). While the working language of the written papers should be English, which would be graded, he allowed his students to post in Chinese if necessary, for the purpose of better understanding. Thus the discussion was not language-focused, but meaning-based.

CW was concerned to establish the protocol for the use of Google Groups-supported discussion in practice. In his opening online message he announced the guidelines for online discussion, so as to ensure its proper use:

‘It is not only a tool [...] to make better use of our limited time, but also an opportunity to practice real communication. I believe that this virtual “space” has potential to help us break new ground as we seek to communicate better with each other and people all over the world.

But it also has potential to be Mis-used and Abused [...] heated discussions, argumentation, verbal sparring, contention etc; I DO NOT intend for this [...]. These discussions are not for the purpose of anyone achieving a “final” or “right” answer, or for demonstrating superiority [but] for the purpose of sharing ideas, making suggestions, postulating new ways of thinking or communicating [...]. [We] must strive together to make it a safe place – safe to make mistakes or [...] suggestions. I would like to think of it as a kind of group brainstorming [...]. For brainstorming to work, it must be creative, and for creativity to work, it must be safe [...].

[...] the Internet can AMPLIFY our communication, often causing it to seem harsher and more direct than we intend, and causing small errors/faux pas [...]. I encourage everyone to review their posts before posting, and to remember that we can all learn from each other.

This DOES NOT mean that we may not disagree with, or critique each other, or put forth additional ideas for consideration! Of course this is also a part of the process of creativity. However, I expect us to do so in a way that is respectful, tolerant, and gracious toward others [...]. So if you do find yourself making a critique of others, please seek to do so in a way that you would like to be critiqued [...].’

U14-DOC/DiscGuide-CW, 23/02/2009 (capitalisation original)

This extract displays in detail how careful and cautious CW was when he integrated the Internet tool into his instruction. The pedagogical purpose of using Google Groups for online discussion was to allow the class to extend exchange and communication outside

class time. Fully aware of the possible pitfalls of online discussion, in his initial post he made explicit the potential misuses ('DO NOT') and proposed a set of rules ('we/I' encourage/expect/must) for the meaningful use of the 'space'. The post had a training role and itself was a concrete model for good posts. In the opening paragraph he mentioned communicating not only within the class, but also beyond, with 'people all over the world' (ibid.). In reality communication did not occur throughout the semester, although he expressed this wish in the interview:

'a class like this, it could be in two countries, yeah that could be awesome [to] have some students in the UK or somewhere else, watch the same films, they write posts on the same website together – this is the Chinese perspective, that is the English perspective – [...] that would be interesting.'

U14-INT-CW, 13/04/2009

During the semester, each student was required to do one small-group or pair presentation on a topic related to the provided discussion topics. CW posted a list of time slots with topics through the online discussion platform (U14-OBV/PrsntSignup, 20-23/03/2009). Students were asked which date(s) would suit their presentations (as they each had different timetables) and what topic(s) they wanted to prioritise. Since they were from different classes, they did not know one another well. Even once they had become classmates for this course, there was hardly any time for them to sit down and work together. Therefore communication and negotiation via the discussion platform or email became essential at the start, although they subsequently changed to using mobile phones. CW was moderating the 'sign-up' process to avoid overlaps or gaps in filling up the slots. He also recommended websites and lent books, on the condition that the references should be acknowledged in the presentation.

6.5.3.2 Snapshot 1 – Online discussion

CW chose *Beijing Bicycle*, a film aiming at a Chinese audience, for its social topics (such as the rural-urban divide, and young people and society) relating to contemporary China. On April 14th, 2009, one day after watching the film, CW created a discussion thread and posted his short message of invitation, in which he also put forward two questions to initiate discussion. Within nine days seven posts appeared (Figure 6.11), including one in Chinese. While no posts answered his questions specifically, each (except for the Chinese post) was written at length for the ‘film response paper’ assessment. The first noticeable phenomenon is that this discussion thread, as well as the rest, was primarily a site for expression of students’ reflections. A textual analysis of this discussion thread showed that there was linguistic evidence of personal reflections (sometimes expressed in a collective tone such as ‘we’ instead of ‘I’). Only one post suggested a peer discussion.

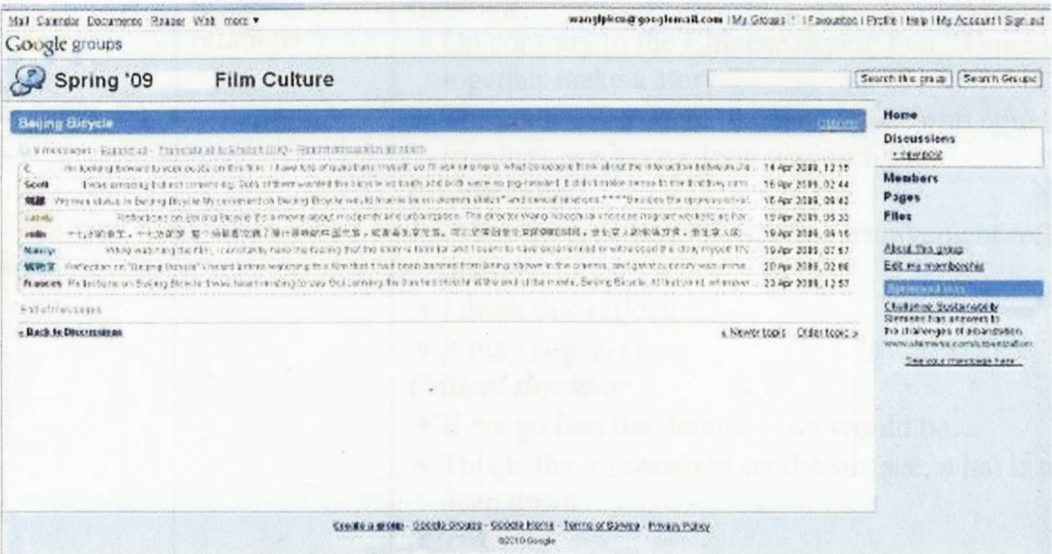


Figure 6.11 The Beijing Bicycle discussion site with collapsed posts

With reference to Byram’s (1997) IC model, linguistic evidence of how far the students demonstrated their intercultural competence was identified. To organise this discussion, Table 6.11 categorises the analysis according to the themes and IC model.

| Students | Themes | Linguistic evidence of IC elements |
|----------------|--|--|
| Scott 16/04 | youth | <p>Empathy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I could see myself in the two boys... • I could feel Gui's feelings... <p>Critical thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At first sight, Jian occurred to me as a real nice guy... • Later developments of the film proved me wrong, but I still liked him because... <p>Interpreting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everything seemed to be telling me that... <p>Relating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like many other films that... <p>Interacting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ... but it's a process all of us have to go through. • At every point of our life, we must learn to... • Growing up is a natural process that we all have to... • Some of our experiences may be very discouraging, but we all must... • ...we will have the chance to look back... |
| Angi 16/04 | women's status and gender relations | <p>Curiosity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...attracted me deeply and brought me to... <p>Relating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On contrary to the Chinese saying that "Three women together make a story." • The status of woman in China is far from equality and freedom; we have a long way to fight. <p>Interpreting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In my perspective, this special arrangement reflects that... • I think this reflects... • It may suggest that... <p>Critical thinking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we go into the details ...we would be... • This is the information on the surface, what if we dive deep down? <p>Interacting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...we even wondered if... • What is interesting is what the brother of Gui (Correct me should I'm wrong.) said... • Finally, let's come to... • Yet her line tells us something. • Above all, we may draw an easy conclusion that... • The question lingers, waiting for us to search... |

(to be continued)

Table 6.11 A categorisation of themes and linguistic evidence of IC elements in students' posts (part 1)

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| Candy 19/04 | modernity, urbanisation, migrant workers | <p>Interpreting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interviewer is put in a hidden place, which I assume is... • This implies... • I think this constructs a contrast... • I think this movie is a little bit overwhelming... <p>Interacting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ...we can see that... <p>Relating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In modern society, the social mechanism and power system tells people... |
| Vivian 19/04 | <i>(Chinese text, no evidence of including her own experience and the collective voice)</i> | |
| Nancy 19/04 | urban-rural gap, modernisation | <p>Empathy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I constantly have the feeling that... • ...I seem to have experienced or witnessed the story myself. <p>Relating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It reminded me of... • There is a survey saying that... <p>Interpreting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And I believe there is more than that. • And now our government is doing a lot to better the lives of them. • I can see that... • So I think... • ...I think the bike means more than... • I think it is just that... |
| Eve 20/04 | migrant workers and urban citizens, parents and children, friends | <p>Relating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I heard before watching this film that... <p>Interpreting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After seeing it, I guess if... • ...it might because... <p>Affective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't quite like the film because of... • ...which make me feel that I could... • I could not help but wondering... |
| Frances 23/04 | urbanisation, migrant workers | <p>Affective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was heart-rending to see... • I think he would... <p>Relating & Interpreting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few years back, people in rural areas of China swarmed into cities... (Things have changed these years ... because...)... • ... was the Chinese version of the pursuit of "the American dream". <p>Interacting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the beginning of the movie, we can see it... |

Table 6.11 A categorisation of themes and linguistic evidence of IC elements in students' posts (part 2)

Although the main task - to post 'film reflection papers' for grading – was fulfilled, the follow-up request for further discussion was ignored, despite the suggestion that each participant should raise a question for discussion at the end of their posts. In fact, some students did raise questions but no one answered, as was the case with CW's question. The discussion topics overlapped somewhat, covering youth, rural-urban divide, modernisation, migrant workers and gender issues. However, there is no clear evidence that students drew on each other's viewpoints.

In contrast, there was some evidence that students related their claims to some external references such as social phenomena, sayings and idioms. However, there was no quotation from original sources as evidence. For instance, one student claimed that 'There is a survey saying that' (see Table 6.11-Nancy) without pointing to the reference. This might be partly due to CW's emphasis on not reading online materials while writing papers/posts, and partly because of the educational culture, which did not teach students to reference citations.

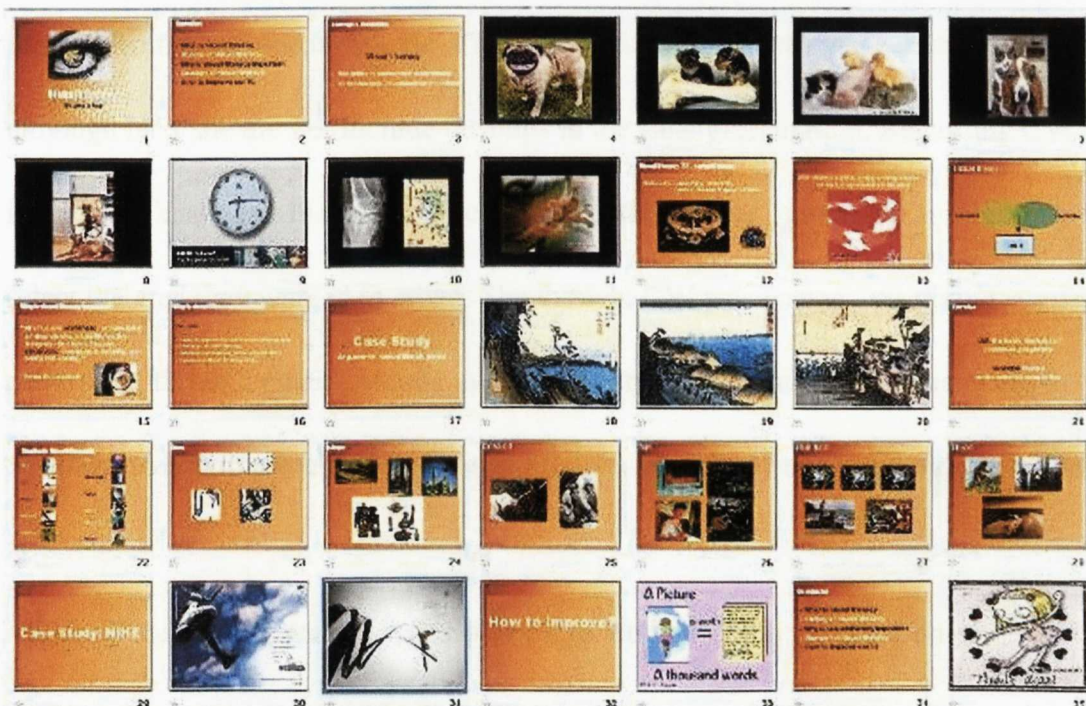
In constructing their texts, students distinguished between the use of the first person in singular ('I/ me') and plural forms ('we/us'). This shows that they saw the class as an audience for their presentation and that there was a sense of online community. With little linguistic evidence of discussion, they seemed to focus on competing with class-mates (since the posts would be graded), rather than negotiating and co-constructing meaning as

would be expected in forums. On only one occasion did a student request a correction from her classmates in case she had mis-remembered (see Table 6.11-Angi).

The workload each student carried was also a practical constraint to undertaking online discussion. As CW said when interviewed, while he put a considerable amount of work into his course, it was not considered the key component in the programme and students had to focus on other courses, which demanded more intensive literature reading and paper writing. When in interview and informal talks the question of students' attitudes towards the online discussion forum was raised, answers differed. Regarding the use of the online forum, student LHX replied that she thought it was 'nice' to include the forum discussion in the course, although she hesitated when saying this. However, during an informal contact some other students, revealed a negative attitude about it. They felt that they were 'forced to do so' (i.e. to be engaged in online discussion and posting), contrary to their initial expectation of watching and appreciating films without the necessity for discussion, and some films were not considered interesting (U14-InfINT-D&C&Y, 13/04/2009).

6.5.3.3 Snapshot 2 – Pair presentation

On the day the 'Presentation Sign Up!' message was posted (March 20th), student LHX replied to the group that she would like to sign up for the slot on April 20th – Visual Literacy – and she was looking forward to finding a partner. Two days later she received a reply to the group from student LY who self-recommended as her partner, with a proposal



It was unclear how much time they had spent working together but according to the interview with student LHX (U14-INT-LHX, 20/04/2009), they worked separately in the first two weeks and then discussed and merged their work for a final product.

Student LHX stressed that they used Google and Baidu search engines for both English and Chinese resources but English materials from Google far outnumbered Baidu's Chinese search results (at the time of this fieldwork Google China was available in a censored form). She explained that the purposes of searching Chinese materials to read would let her know 'what's going on in China about this topic' and also allow her to understand the topic better in her native language. She assumed that the subject 'visual literacy' was more of interest to western academics than to Chinese ones. She also revealed that with a friend's help she had found a way to download two video clips on visual literacy from YouTube, a Google-affiliated website which was inaccessible in China, although later she did not include the clips in the final presentation. Regarding CW's role in their work, she felt that his instruction was rather 'loose', giving them flexibility to select the area they wanted to cover. She thought CW was responsive, giving suggestions on request, through email. Among themselves, students mainly shared materials by emailing and texting each other through the Internet-based Fetion text messaging service.

Although student LY was unavailable for interview after the presentation, she sent her learning diary (U14-DOC/LD-LY, 21/04/2009, see below). The diary echoes what informant LHX described – during one month they mostly worked as individuals in places such as home, the residence and the library. They read some academic and professional

web pages (in the ‘Evidence’ below, indicated by ‘.edu’ or ‘.org’) recommended by CW.

They mostly used email to share materials and ideas. Via Google they also searched other materials, especially advertisements, to illustrate the topic of visual literacy.

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Topic: | Visual literacy |
| Objectives: | Presentation for IC course |
| Location: | home, dom and library |
| Context: | mostly Individual |
| Online tools: | google, email |
| Experience: | Browse websites provided by our professor, Googled some info on relevant subjects, esp the ad photos Feeling: Internet tools seem to be quite essential to our presentation preparation. |
| Evidence: | http://www.pomona.edu/Academics/courserelated/classprojects/Visual-it/introintro.html http://www.museumca.org/picturethis/visual.html http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/worth/svscom.html http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/visualsites.html http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/lester/courses/viscomlinks.html http://www.wadsworth.com//communication_d/templates/student_resources/053459068_massey/media_literacy/index.html http://power-points.blogspot.com/2005/09/really-bad-powerpoint-and-how-to-avoid.html |

U14-DOC/ LD-LY, 21/04/2009

The process described above sets out the convention of the class’ presentation practice, which was considered ‘helpful in self-development’ in that the class ‘could learn from others who were under pressure to present their best before their peers’ (U14-INT-LHX, 20/04/2009). The group confirmed the essential role of the Internet tools (search engine, email) in the success of their cooperation. Student LHX added that the unavailability of an Internet service in the classroom prevented her making use of online materials by, for example, linking to original websites during her presentation.

On the Google Groups discussion site, there had been no discussions on the topics presented by students. When asked if they would upload the PowerPoint to the Google Group site for sharing and further discussion, student LHX answered that she was not aware of this need since CW did not request an upload of the PowerPoint slides after the presentation. As far as she knew, the online site had been used for film discussions and messages from CW so far. This was confirmed by CW who clarified that students were only assessed on their presentations, not the subsequent discussions; the only assessed discussions were those about films. This indicates that the use of Internet tools was strongly influenced by pedagogical demands.

6.5.4 Summary

This case analysis presents a distinctive context in which master-level language students were investigated whereas the other three cases all looked into undergraduate-level English teaching and learning. The main features of this case are as follows:

- The Intercultural Institution was a research entity that is independent from, yet related to, the College of English and it was managed by American scholars;
- The institutional goal of developing ICC, while not driven by national guidelines, was consistent within the programme, including the optional course *Cultural Analysis of Film*;
- The course was more cognitive-based, not language skills-based;

- It was the institution's practice to use Google mail and its affiliated functions such as Groups as means of communication and instruction between teachers and students;
- The Internet infrastructure was less supportive in class;
- The informant teacher was concerned to ensure effective use of the Internet;
- Students used the discussion forum as a site for posting their reflective papers, without intending to engage in discussion.

Institutionally, there was a facilitative atmosphere, promoting intercultural communication and competence through an array of courses from theory to practice. The teaching/research staff team was composed of American academics, so that the institutional setting itself was intercultural. It had institutional practices such as requesting staff and students to use Google mail as a means of routine communication and its affiliated functions as a method of instruction. This institutional culture of using Internet technology helped to maintain the community as a unit despite the students' dispersed presence.

However, the unavailability of an Internet connection in classrooms and teaching blocks proved a significant drawback in planning pedagogical use of technology. There appeared to be a gap between students' postings on the online group site and the subsequent discussion. Nevertheless, students' use of technology was driven by the assessment requirement. Since only the posts regarding film reflections were graded, it is reasonable to assume that students would limit their efforts to those assignments. Another pedagogical purpose was to enhance students' critical thinking. CW prepared appropriate resources and materials, which offered good support, for instance, in scaffolding students' presentation

preparation. CW seemed, too, to prioritise the use of the online group site as a platform for discussion. However, students appeared to be more intent on the expression of their own criticisms and ideas, rather than on negotiation and reflection on each other's contributions.

6.6 Case 4 – U17 Moodle-mediated English Literature class

6.6.1 Background

I met CHS at a conference in Shanghai in November 2008, where she presented her teaching experience on using Moodle for her English classes. She listened to my fieldwork proposal with interest and agreed that she could help with my research but indicated that she needed to seek her students' support. However, she apologised for not recommending her colleagues for my research, as I wished, because she joked that she was the only person enthusiastic about using new technologies in language teaching in her department. She explained that the English Department received little attention from the authorities at the university (U17) which specialises in sport science and physical education. Hence, the department as a whole was not motivated to experiment with new ideas and practices.

Self-trained with some CALL knowledge, CHS became increasingly committed to applying CALL to her classes. She recalled her experience experimenting with Japanese partner classes for online exchange through Skype chat but she said the experience was rather negative due to both groups of students having a poor level of English, and the technical constraint of Skype only permitting small-scale synchronous communication. She thought that it was more feasible for her to manage a virtual learning environment within a

class than to collaborate with distance partners. However, she had no objection to collaboration with a good partner, if there were any from English speaking countries. She asked me if I could help with looking for some possible partners prior to the new semester in spring 2009. I subsequently advertised her invitation through the Computer-mediated Communication Special Interest Group within EUROCALL (European Association of Computer-Assisted Language Learning) but unfortunately her proposed telecollaboration was not successful at such short notice.

The plan for the coming semester (February – June 2009) was to introduce English literature to Year-3 English majors in two parallel classes. As the literature course would only take up 36 hours throughout the semester CHS planned to use Moodle as an extended learning environment for discussions after class. Initially, the two parallel classes (Table 6.12) were both included for observation and interviews, for the purpose of comparison. However, for the sake of avoiding repetition and ensuring consistency in the discussion, only Class 2’s data were used. Documents, including a range of materials from CHS and her classes, were collected.

| | | | |
|--------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| Institution | U17, Specialised (sports science and education) | Case | English Dept – Class 1 and Class 2 taking up English literature course |
| Teacher | CHS, Associate Professor | Duration | 17/03-30/04/09 |
| Student | Year 3 English majors (Sports English) | Data source | Observations, documents, interviews |

Table 6.12 Summary of the key information of Case 4

6.6.2 The context

Based on the national curriculum for English majors (MoE 2000), the literature course is compulsory for English majors, with the main purpose of enhancing literacy and appreciation of British and American classics from the 18th century onwards. However, this course was not considered an important component in practice, as its content was not officially included in the TEM-8 until quite recently. According to the latest sample examination paper released by the MoE (2000), a section on ‘General Knowledge’, including literature knowledge, has been added for examination, although it only accounts for 10% of the overall examination. This requirement has ensured that the literature course still has its place in the language programme.

The course book (Figure 6.13) selected for the first half of the semester is titled *History and Anthology of English Literature* (Book 2), published in 1988 by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press. It offers a collection of well-known passages from texts by influential literary figures. No graphs, illustrations or audio-visual materials are provided for study with the print, nor any online resources. To take a section of the textbook as an example, the eighth theme is about the introduction of the Victorian Age, and comprises ‘Critical Realism in England’ as a background, and some highlighted writers such as Charles Dickens and Charlotte Brontë. Except for some annotations, there are no instructions or tasks. This shows that the textbook does not provide enough pedagogical guidance for teachers and students. Nevertheless, it allows teachers great flexibility to design tasks for students. Regardless of this style of presentation (which is common in

literature textbooks published in China), CHS made this choice because other textbooks appeared lengthier.

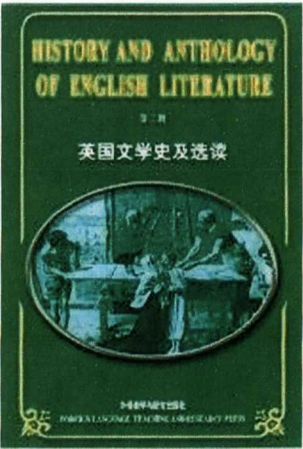


Figure 6.13 The cover of the textbook

However, for CHS, literature teaching should present the background of the authors and their works and also be relevant to students' life experiences. Her students were expected to learn about significant figures and events in literary history, to read selectively and in depth from a range of famous writers' works, to relate the readings to their own experience, and to critically reflect on these works. In an interview, she acknowledged that she previously had planned to lead classroom-based discussions but soon found that she had to spend each session explaining the background and the authors (U17-INT-CHS, 29/04/09). Therefore, as a technophile, she set up a Moodle site for students to extend their discussion and reflection out of class, with the help of online resources.

She knew from experience that as long as new ways of teaching were introduced without affecting the administration, teaching and assessment, the Department would intervene

neither in support of nor against her innovations. The challenge, she complained, was lack of proper technical support, as the institution had little interest in Internet technologies. The institution only had a web page, which was infrequently updated. Therefore, she registered for a free Moodle account and set up an *English Literature* (EL) course (Figure 6.14). Then she requested her classes to register on the EL platform as individuals and to familiarise themselves with the learning environment before the start.

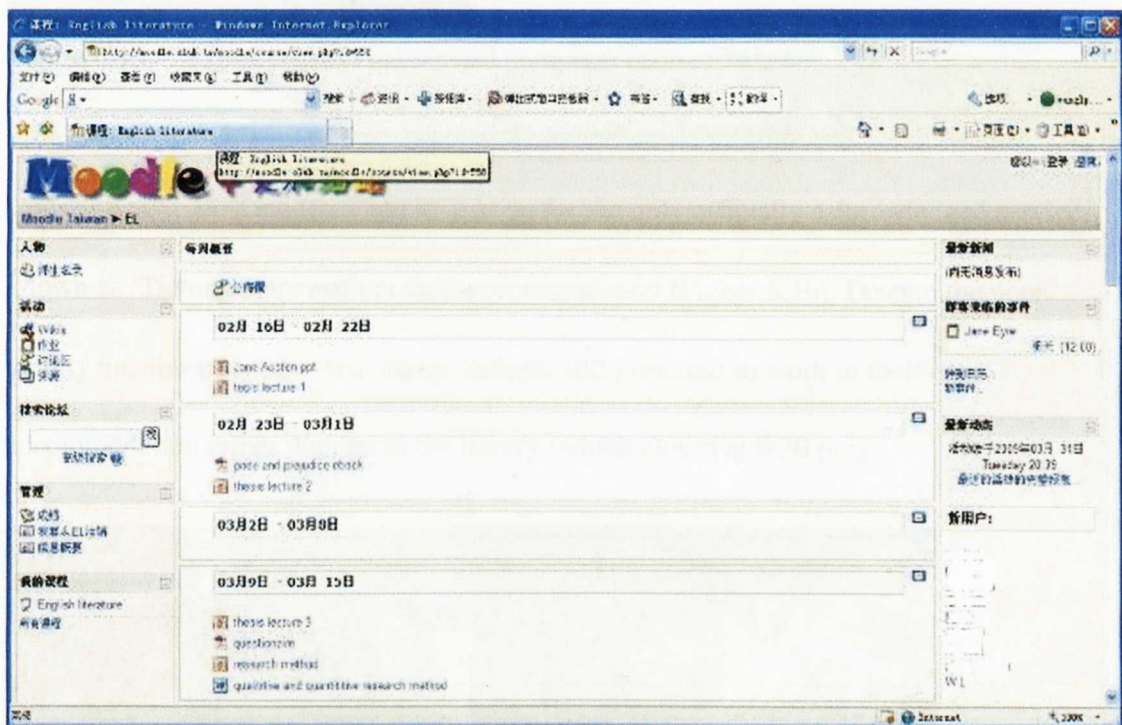


Figure 6.14 The screenshot of the Moodle-based EL course

This proposal ran into difficulty due to under-provision of computers and slow Internet connections on campus. The university library accommodated about 200 computers (Figure 6.15), only half of which were intranet-connected. To use Internet-connected computers in the library students had to pay extra fees, deductible from their account.

Other areas in the library offered free wireless connection but desks were few, and the connection was unstable.



Figure 6.15 Library-based networked computer centre

Figure 6.16 Work conditions at student accommodation (photos taken by students)

Consequently, most students had to sign up for the only officially acknowledged service, known as ‘Tietong Network’, at their accommodation (Figure 6.16). Despite the poor quality unanimously reported, many students still preferred to work in their own accommodation rather than go to the library (which closed at 9:30 pm).



Figure 6.16 Work conditions at student accommodation (photos taken by students)

Figure 6.17 Multimedia classroom (photo taken by CHS)

Although no departmental computer lab was available, CHS obtained official permission to use one of only two multimedia classrooms in the department, which were only accessible to students when it was booked. The multimedia classroom (Figure 6.17) had good

equipment, including a networked computer with loudspeakers and overhead projector as well as an interactive whiteboard connected to a bigger screen positioned in the left front corner so as to be more visible to students.

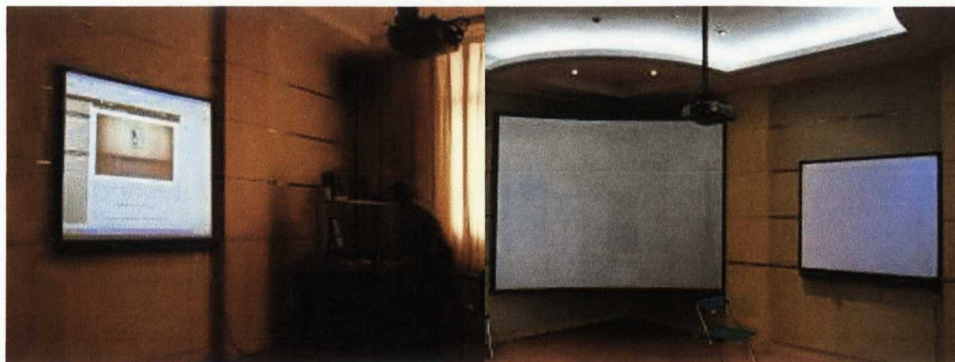


Figure 6.17 A view of multimedia classroom layout

6.6.3 Teacher-student perceptions and interactions

6.6.3.1 Teacher's perceptions and practices

In questionnaire feedback, CHS agreed that the Internet should be an important element in the textbook-based language class, although it might be time-consuming and impractical in some circumstances. She strongly believed that using technologies could be helpful not only for developing students' language skills but also to illustrate how language was used in specific social contexts and for intercultural communication. She realised that while use of the Internet could bring benefits (e.g. authentic materials, communication and active learning) to the language class, it could also increase uncertainty and anxiety. She was aware that using the Internet for language activities involved the students in taking responsibility for engagement and cooperation, including that of the partner class, if any.

Concerning her CALL practices, she had experience in using a variety of Internet tools for teaching, mainly Webquest and Moodle, and also engaged her students in using them.

CHS held that it was important to arouse students' interest in learning about literature and writers, particularly if the socio-historical context was different from the one in which they lived. She felt that the lack of audio-visual aids in lecturing would be likely to limit students' interest and motivation as the western and Victorian content is remote and unfamiliar in today's Chinese society, making it even more difficult to appreciate and reflect on. She thought that the traditional way of teaching literature through reading texts was inefficient and boring, considering the current fast pace of social development, and students' expectations. CHS was also aware of her department's low profile in English education, compared with other universities around the region. Regardless of this reputation, she insisted on motivating her classes with encouragement and support. She had known them well since the second year when she started to teach extensive reading to these same classes. She was also responsible for tutoring her classes in academic writing, through which she introduced various means of doing online research, mainly focusing on sourcing information. Although she assumed that her students were to a certain degree capable of using search engines, she thought it was still useful as preparation for the literature course to familiarise her students with the tools for learning purposes. In addition, CHS knew her students played computer games and surfed the net for shopping or networking, and decided to push her students harder into also using the web for more challenging and learning-oriented purposes.

To do so, CHS divided each themed unit into two parts: firstly she presented an introduction and the historical background; then she proposed a thematic analysis and extended discussion. She led the discussion but allowed her class great flexibility in exploring the topics from the literature texts and reporting their work. To ensure that students fully participated in group work, she assigned tasks to students in groups of four in advance. Each student adopted one of the four roles in group collaboration. Students grouped themselves as they wished, with CHS as their consultant. She specified the roles as Table 6.13 presents.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Discussion Director | Responsible for coming up with 4 Qs based on the reading. Q1: deals with a literal aspect of the work in question: character, symbolism, theme, setting, etc; Q2: deal with a more interpretive aspect; Q3: how the author relates this work to real-world scenarios and events; Q4: how this work is still relevant for modern readers. |
| Passage Master | Responsible for identifying four to six passages from the text that you feel are significant to the reading. These passages may reflect key events, provide insight into the characters or themes, or in some other way contribute to the overall importance of the works. |
| Connector | Responsible for writing a two-page, personal connection to the work being read. You should discuss a personal reaction to the reading. What personal memory/memories does it bring to mind? How does it relate to other literary works, films, television programmes you have encountered? What important social, political or cultural events does it remind you of? Choose one subject for your response. |
| Investigator | Responsible for writing a brief report on some aspect of the reading. You can choose to write about the author's life, a historical figure found in the text, or a topic or issue that is relevant to the work being read. You may gather your findings from books, articles, Internet sources, or other sources of credible information. Your report should be no more than two pages long. |

Table 6.13 Roles in the learning group (U17- DOC/PPT-CHS, 26/03/2009)

This role specification was detailed, so as to guide the students whilst still allowing flexibility. The tasks for each role were progressively developed, with a focus shifting

from the literature text itself to students’ own lives. They needed to work together and plan the format of class presentation and publication posted on the Moodle forum, for their fellow students to discuss further. The procedure can be seen in Figure 6.18.

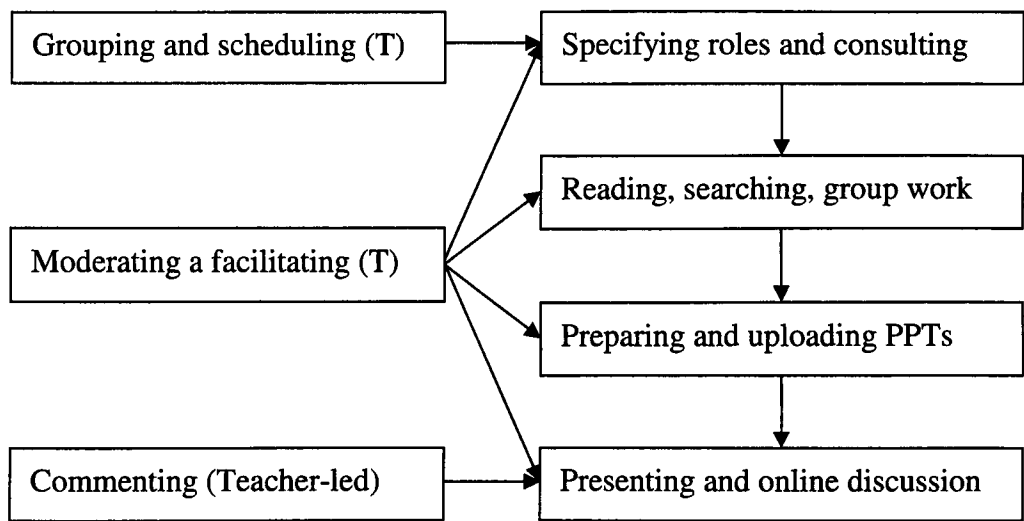


Figure 6.18 The procedure of CHS’ literature teaching by using Moodle

6.6.3.2 Students’ perceptions and practices

Students’ perceptions of learning literature, using the Internet and learning English were complex. According to the interviews, both formally and informally, students generally had a low estimation of themselves as English majors studying in this sport-dominated university. They also felt some ‘blame’ for not performing well enough to go to ‘famous’ universities. This generally negative impression significantly affected their motivation and confidence in learning the language, as they were worried about their reduced competitiveness for future employment compared with English majors from other prestigious universities in the region.

They were also concerned about lack of teaching resource. Some interviewees complained that the department did not have a big staff team, nor were there well-known academics for them 'to feel proud of'. The departmental publicity indeed confirmed that there were ten full-time teachers, including three associate professors, for around 240 English major students at all levels (U17-DOC/DptPrf, 18/03/2009). The students did not feel enabled to experience a diversity of teaching perspectives. Additionally, they complained about limited access to overseas teachers. According to the departmental introduction (ibid.), there were four international teachers working with the students. In fact, as students explained, these were contracted teachers from a local language training service. At the time of my visit, only two of these taught Year-1 and Year-2 students. Year-3 students felt strongly de-motivated due to the lack of 'native-speaker teachers'. Students explicitly or implicitly expressed the view that they should have had 'a foreign teacher' to teach the literature course so that they might continue to receive authentic language (and cultural) input from 'a native speaker', though they did not mean to show disrespect to CHS.

Most interviewed students admitted that they were unclear about the goal of intercultural communicative competence development as stated in the curriculum or described by their teachers. Only a few recalled that there was an optional course called *Cross-cultural Communication*, delivered by another department, in Chinese. Many of them expressed little interest in literature, which they did not see as an asset in a primarily skill-based job market. A minority of students, however, insisted that as language students they should be strong in literature, which should be one of the advantages compared with other students

who had acquired proficiency in English but had little cultural knowledge (e.g.U17-InfINT-THX, 28/04/09).

In terms of using Internet technologies, all the interviewees agreed that teachers had no enthusiasm for Internet use in teaching activities, except CHS. They unanimously criticised the low efficiency of the Internet service provider 'Tietong', although they used a variety of Internet tools for purposes ranging from entertainment to information searching, and communication to socialising. However, except for searching for information and watching online video clips on relevant topics discussed in class, they seldom used other tools for learning purposes. Students agreed that using search engines like Baidu and Google was necessary for completing presentation tasks which relied on materials like video clips, and online images and texts. However, they reported that they were unsure 'how to choose useful and authoritative materials' (U17-DOC/LD-LN, 20/04/09) effectively. In informal interviews, quite a few students explained that to save time reading English texts, they mostly used Chinese key words for searching.

6.6.3.3 Snapshot 1 – Online negotiation of assessment

Assessment was a rather contested topic between CHS and her students. In line with her approach to using Moodle, which required constant student effort to participate in and contribute to discussions, CHS reduced the weighting of summative assessment (40%) (to which the students paid most attention) by increasing the weighting of formative assessment (60%). The former included reading novels, discussion, completing

assignments and attendance at classes while the latter was an end-of-term test. Her intention was to encourage her students to really benefit from the learning process rather than learning for the sake of the grade and she believed that such an outcome was more objective, fair and reasonable (U17-DOC/Assess-CHS). To avoid confusion, she subsequently published the scheme on the Moodle site, explaining the rationale behind it and inviting open discussion about how, if necessary, it might be refined. She described herself as considerate and fair, and indicated that she was willing to sacrifice some of her authority to empower her students to exercise autonomy.

However, her classes objected to this assessment scheme both verbally and in writing. Students thought they were asked to undertake more assessed work than required by the departmental guidelines. In the 17 online discussion threads in the assessment topic, most of the complaints revolved around the quantity-quality issue and the impartiality of peer scoring. For example, many students felt that contributing five posts to each unit discussion in order to get a full score was either too demanding, or meaningless. Students also argued that fairness would be a problem for peer scoring, in which the potential for subjective or arbitrary evaluation would be influenced by personal relationships (U17-OBV-ZJ, 29/03/09). Subsequently, the respondents divided into two camps, one being against scoring, even by the teacher, whereas the other opted for marking by the teacher, provided that after scoring the teacher selected some good posts for the class to share (U17-OBV-CLZ, 27/03/2009). It was observed that although these were the views of only that part of the student body which had engaged in online discussion (i.e. only part of the student body), verbal discontent with the scheme was widespread among the classes.

Taking students' concerns into account, CHS specified criteria (Table 6.14) for each grade so as to help her students construct quality-based discussion posts. It can be seen that the criteria attached importance to some of the ICC elements (Byram 1997) such as skills of interpretation (i.e. explain why), relating (i.e. support with examples) and (self-)reflection.

| | Outstanding (5points) | Above Average (4.5 points) | Basic (4 points) | Bare Bones (3 points) |
|-----------------|---|---|--|--|
| Quality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries show reflection on significant issues, themes, and concerns raised in text(s) • personal connections with text(s) • Insightful, perceptive reading of text(s) • Vivid, clear writing that provokes new ideas • You explain why something matters to you, or why you make a certain point or claim | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries include some reflection about what you're reading • You usually support your points with at least two examples from the reading or discussion, or evidence from other reputable sources • Creative, unusual ideas • You explain why you are make a certain point or claim, or why something matters to you | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries include basic reflection about what you're reading • You can support your points with one example from reading or discussion, or evidence from other reputable sources • You sometimes explain why you are making a certain point or claim | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries fail to include basic reflection about what you're reading • You do not support your points with solid examples, or evidence from other reputable sources • You do not explain why you are making a certain point or claim |
| Quantity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You answer all of the questions • Your answers are complete and thorough | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You answer at least two or three of the questions • Your answers are complete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You answer some but not all of the questions • Your answers are mostly complete | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You answer at least one of the questions • Your answers are mostly incomplete |

Table 6.14 Critical Response/Discussion Rubric (U17-DOC/Disc-CHS, 30/04/2009)

6.6.3.4 Snapshot 2 – The Victorian Age & Charles Dickens

In this session, CHS summarised her previous lecture about Romanticism and introduced the topic on the Victorian Age with Class 2. The objectives were background knowledge about the Victorian Period and exposure (through reading and watching videos) to the works of Dickens.

CHS first provided a link to the ‘Walk though Time’ webpage in a BBC History website, in which a flash game required students to recognise anachronistic elements in a Victorian street scene (Figure 6.19) by selecting and dragging them to a ‘space-time tunnel’. They watched the game together and some volunteered to name the anachronistic items while CHS dragged them. This game seemed to motivate the class to gain an awareness of the cultural-historical background through an interactive visual presentation. The game was followed by a short lecture with PowerPoint slides, based on a website called Victorianweb, to introduce the main political and literary characteristics of the Victorian Period. Since the website mainly presented lengthy texts in small type, CHS asked her students to read the details after class.



Figure 6.19 A screenshot of the flash game

The second online activity was playing an animation film about Dickens, based on the BBC production of Bleak House (Figure 6.20). CHS played it twice and asked students to take notes on Dickens’ biographical details such as his birthday, the year he moved to London, the date of his death, etc. Then she presented a video clip about films based on Dickens’ novels, to help students recognise some of the famous works. Due to time constraints, CHS did not play the whole of *Oliver Twist*. Instead, she assigned students to read Chapters 2 and 3 in their textbooks and prepare questions for the next session’s discussion. She also suggested her students watch relevant film clips in their spare time. Table 6.15 below summarises the sequence of activities.



Figure 6.20 CHS playing a BBC animation of Charles Dickens’ life

| | | |
|---|--------------|--|
| When: Thu, 19/03/09 | Who: Class 2 | Where: Multimedia classroom |
| Teacher’s role: moderating and facilitating | | Students’ role: observing |
| What: The Victorian Age and its literature | | Why |
| 1. Game: Walk through time (http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/walk/games/index.shtml) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognise anachronistic elements in a Victorian street scene; • To learn some vocabulary about occupations |
| 2. Lecturing: main characteristics of Victorian Age via the Victorian Web (http://www.victorianweb.org/index.html) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn about the political, social, cultural, literary, technological and religious aspects of the Victorian age |
| 3. Demonstrating: Charles Dickens via a BBC animation (http://www.bbc.co.uk/ama/bleakhouse/animation.shtml) and his works via pre-downloaded video clips | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn about the author’s biography; • To practise listening and note-taking |
| 4. Lecturing: Oliver Twist via CD-Rom and textbook | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn about and watch the works of Dickens |

Table 6.15 Snapshot 2 – The Victorian Age and Charles Dickens

CHS used the Internet as a resource bank to introduce the background to Victorian culture. The presentation of learning materials from online resources was culturally authentic and therefore greatly enhanced students' interest in the learning activities. With reference to the framework of developing ICC, the students' cognitive domain (e.g. cultural knowledge, vocabulary learning) and affective domain (e.g. showing interest in another culture) were focused on explicitly. The behavioural development remained implicit, although CHS provided resources (URLs) for further discovery and suggested watching some film clips.

6.6.3.5 Snapshot 3 – *The Brontës and Jane Eyre*

Class 2 were engaged in a session on the theme of *The Brontës and Jane Eyre*. In a previous session, students were required to contribute online discussions for this session. Prior to the session, CHS found that there were posts on the forum so she read and subsequently edited the discussions in her PowerPoint slides. Coincidentally, on the day, the Internet connection was down, although it was not used much in class. The objectives were 1) to complete reading Chapter 23 of *Jane Eyre*, which was printed out from a website and 2) to review and add to online discussions. She chose Chapter 23 rather than Chapter 5 from the textbook because she considered Chapter 23 'the most attractive' part of the novel. She asked questions focusing on language and rhetorical features of the text to check students' comprehension. She also highlighted the scene of Rochester's proposal to Jane and asked for students' imagined responses.

During the presentation phase, two students worked respectively as a connector and an investigator (Figure 6.21). They related *Jane Eyre* to *Oliver Twist* through the theme of childhood humiliation and further explored the topic in relation to their own childhoods. During the presentation, they used a short video clip searched from the Internet. It was followed up by CHS's brief comments.

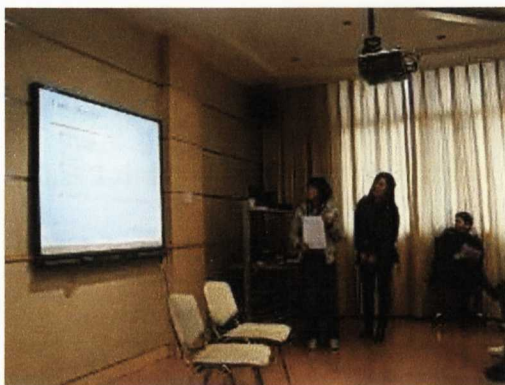


Figure 6.21 Students' presentation

The session (Table 6.16) closed with CHS's review of the class discussion in Moodle. She acknowledged the contributors' efforts while urging those non-contributing students to offer input. In addition, she shared her personal experience with the class about the topics under discussion (e.g. the gender equality issue in contemporary society) and engaged the students in more discussion.

| | | |
|--|--------------|---|
| When: Thu, 14/04/09 | Who: Class 2 | Where: Multimedia classroom |
| Teacher's role: Moderating and commenting | | Students' role: Discussing and presenting |
| What: The Brontës and Jane Eyre | | Why |
| 1. Text reading (Chapter 23 of Jane Eyre http://www.readprint.com/chapter-685/Jane-Eyre-Charlotte-Bronte) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn the details in Chapter 23 • To check students' comprehension |
| 2. Student presentation (PPT, with prepared pictures and video clips from online resources) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop presentation skills (implicit) • To relate and analyse the text from an investigative perspective |
| 3. Commenting (pre-edited quotes from students' Moodle discussion in PPT form) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage thinking deeply about the literary in relation to the contemporary world; • To encourage expressions of personal experience and views about the discussion topics |

Table 6.16 Snapshot 3 – The Brontës and Jane Eyre

Although in this session the Internet was unavailable, CHS and Class 2 engaged in Internet-based work ahead of time. The Internet, while used as a resource, offered a platform for communication outside the class, relying on students' autonomy. By contrast, Class 1 did not fulfil their obligations properly. When monitoring the Moodle forum, CHS found that in Class 1, only one topic was discussed by two students whereas the rest kept silent. When challenged, some students explained that they had tried but had experienced a slow connection at their accommodation. This sounded to her like an excuse since Class 2 was working under the same conditions, which indicated that accessibility was not the real reason. CHS though felt unhappy about Class 1's response, and argued that they could have worked in the library for temporary Internet use and insisted that their online discussion would still be graded according to their participation and contribution.

In a subsequent informal conversation (U17-InfINT-C&ZH, 17/04/2009) with the two students who contributed posts in the only discussion thread, they revealed that the class considered online participation to be meaningless. Students CL and ZYW felt that their class differed from Class 2 in its learning style – their class (Class 1) chose to be more social and free from learning pressures; in other words, Class 1 did not want to be asked to do something which appeared 'less interesting', i.e. discussing online for the sake of getting marks. When asked why they contributed to the online discussion, CL revealed that she was the class representative so she should set an example for the class to cooperate with CHS. Therefore, she 'forced' her roommate, ZYW to have online conversations as if they were discussing from remote sites. However, this poor level of participation from the whole class improved afterwards.

6.6.3.6 Snapshot 4 – Wuthering Heights

Selected for its representativeness, this snapshot presents a threaded ‘discussion’ from the EL Moodle platform. The topic was derived from a class discussion between CHS and Class 2. CHS compared *Wuthering Heights* with *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (*The Butterfly Lovers*, a classic Chinese tragic love story, known as China’s *Romeo and Juliet*). Seeing the potential interest in this topic, CHS suggested adding a thread to the Wuthering Heights forum, aimed at comparing the two classics. It lasted for five days and there were altogether ten responses to the thread (Figure 6.22). Student THX initiated the discussion thread as ‘The similarities and differences between *Wuthering Heights* and *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai* (U17-OBV-THX, 20/04/2009, italics original)’ and she presented her views with a piece of text explaining similarities and differences.

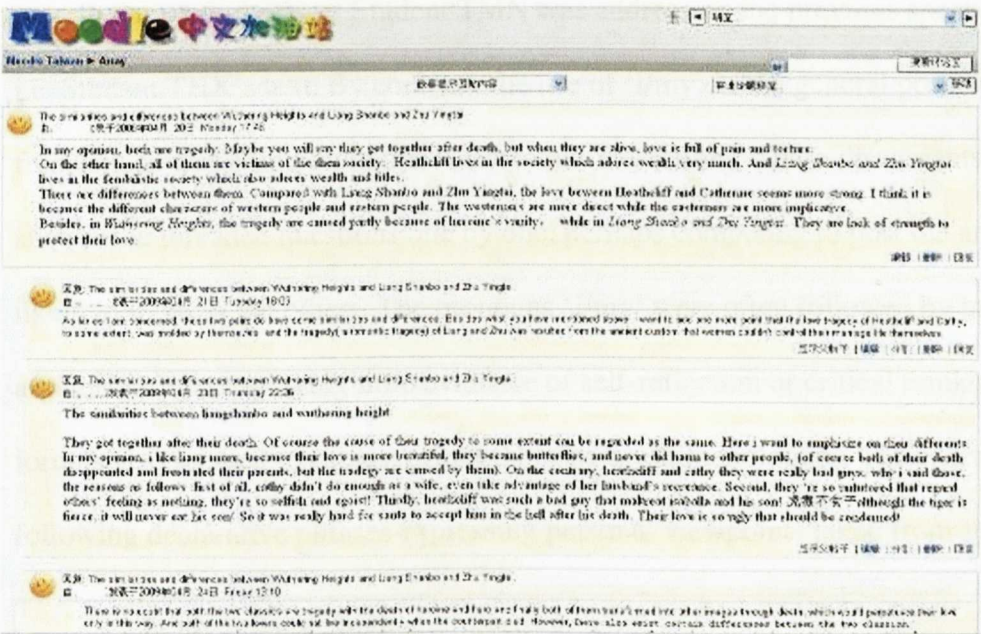


Figure 6.22 A screenshot of the online discussion forum

An examination of these posted posts shows some interesting findings. Firstly, the posts did not engender much interactivity among the participants, who tended to use it as a platform for self-expression rather than group discussion. This can be evidenced from students’ use of

person reference in their writing. Throughout the posts, there were only two instances of using the second person 'you' to refer to other participants, as noted below.

'In my opinion, both are tragedy. Maybe you will say they get together after death ...'

Student THX, 20/04/2009

'Besides what you have mentioned above, I want to add one more point that...'

Student TMN, 21/04/2009

U17-OBV/Disc, 20-4/04/09

Initiating the topic, Student THX used the pronoun 'you'. Although it can be assumed that she was trying to draw the class into a discussion, there was no clear clue to this from her text. In the second extract Student TMN was addressing the previous speaker's comment, i.e. Student THX's text. By contrast, the use of 'I/my' in the general posts was much more frequent, as was common in their classroom interactions. These discussants appeared to answer the threaded questions one by one, perhaps competing to post the answer most likely to impress the others. The pronouns 'I/my' were often followed by much argumentation, displaying little evidence of self-reflection or critical thinking. The online forums also seemed to consist primarily of adjacent monologues. The examples include the following declarative phrases expressing personal viewpoints taken from students' posts.

'In my opinion, both are tragedy.'

'I think it is because...'

'As far as I'm concerned, ...'

'... I want to add one more point that...'

'Here I want to emphasize on ...'

'In my opinion, i like ...'

'... why i said those, ...'

'I think the tragedy... In my opinion, ... We may say...'

'On the other hand, I want to say, ...'

'as far as I'm concerned, ...'

'in my opinion, ...' or 'in my humble opinion, both stories...'

ibid.

In other posts where the pronouns 'I/my' were missing, the texts were organised in an analytical rather than a dialogic way. There was little or no negotiation. In addition, all but one of the participants contributed once to this forum and rarely returned, which suggested that they had a sense of task completion, perhaps being unfamiliar with the discursive nature of forum discussion. There was little evidence of posts relating to each other's texts or external sources to scaffold their discussion, negotiation, reflection, and critical thinking. This might have been due to the forum's use as an assessment tool, i.e. there was no reward for extra posts. In addition, the fact that students met face-to-face everyday made it unnecessary for them to meet in the forum. In fact, students in the same class often shared the same accommodation and could communicate in their dormitory or on other occasions, thus negating the need to maintain a sense of community through online discussion.

Regarding content, the participants adopted a cross-cultural comparative approach to this 'discussion' as might be expected in a thread entitled 'The similarities and differences between *Wuthering Heights* and *Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai*'. However, they seemed only to talk about the two classics at a superficial level, with a degree of over-generalisation and stereotyping. For instance, in comparing the love between the two couples, Student THX (April 20th, 2009) held that 'the love between Heathcliff and Catherine seems more strong'. She then attributed it to 'the different characteristics of western people and eastern people' on the grounds that 'The westerners are more direct while the easterners are more implicative [suggestive]' (ibid., brackets added). In Student YC's argument, she asserted that the marriage between Catherine and Hareton might indicate a change of social conventions and progress in social development (April 24th, 2009), but failed to justify her view through referencing.

Many students in the discussion asserted their preference for the love between Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. For example, Student FXL simply commented that ‘Liangzhu’s [Liang-Zhu’s] love happened in a natural way, and their love is pure... But on the other hand ... the wuthering height’s love story is not that beautiful...’ (24/04/2009, brackets added). Student FEN was more straightforward in showing her lack of sympathy for the hero and heroine in Wuthering Heights. She claimed that:

‘On the contrary, heathcliff and cathy they were bad guys [...] they’re so selfish and egoist! [...] heathcliff was such a bad guy that maltreat isaballa and his son! 虎毒不食子[even a vicious tiger doesn’t eat its cubs] although the tiger is fierce, it will never eat his son! So it was really hard for santa to accept him in the hell after his death. Their love is so ugly that should be condemned!’

U17-OBV/Disc-FEN, 24/04/09 (brackets added)

This extract showed an attempt on the part of the student to construct her argument by using the Chinese idiom. However, her interpretation of this idiom was not accurate. There was no evidence to show that she consulted a dictionary or other sources. She also incorrectly used the cultural word ‘santa’ in her conclusion sentence ‘So it was really hard for santa to accept him in the hell after his death’. What she actually meant was ‘Satan’, the devil, not ‘Santa’, the joyful Christmas symbol. Such a mistake could be a typo but no one corrected this error, nor was there comment from CHS.

While it is right that discussion should not only engage with cognitive thinking but also with affective aspects, it is also important to be open and non-judgemental in respect of other cultures. In Student FEN’s argument, she showed her attitude towards the love between Heathcliff and Catherine by applying Chinese cultural values, without taking the English cultural background into account. Secondly, from the list of vocabulary, i.e. the verbs (‘maltreat’, ‘condemn’), adjectives (‘bad’, ‘selfish’, ‘egoist (sic)’, ‘ugly’) and

adverbs (‘so’, ‘such’) it can be seen that she projected her negative emotion on the literature figures rather than suspending her own judgemental feelings when exploring a cultural-historical context that she was not familiar with. Even allowing for the legitimacy of personal likes and dislikes, this example suggests that this student’s ability to mediate between different discourses was lacking, and that such an ability is important in helping students balance their affective, cognitive and behavioural development.

Apart from online ‘discussions’, students also used search engines frequently for searching textual (and visual) materials. In interviews, a recurring theme was that without the Internet, it was ‘impossible’ to prepare presentations. However, the use of the Internet had some distinct characteristics. Firstly, students prefer using video clips to other materials, as if there was a consensus that watching films was more relaxing and enjoyable than reading texts. Secondly, they used the China-based search engine, Baidu, more than Google because it was considered more effective to search with Chinese keywords. This suggested that they mainly chose to think in Chinese about the content they were preparing for. Thirdly, they opted for a ‘fast track’ to search for existing reviews or reflective essays (preferably, in Chinese) from the Internet so that they could then use the downloaded texts for their own presentations. This was evidenced from some students’ learning diaries.

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Topic: | Analysis about the novel: Wuthering Heights |
| Objectives: | Further analyse the connotation of Wuthering Heights and make a PPT about it |
| Location: | in dormitory |
| Context: | firstly, four group members discuss this topic together and conclude some common opinions, then complete it individually |
| Online tools: | Google, Baidu |
| Experience: | We don’t know much of the novel, especially the implicit meanings, so at first we search the Internet. But we are confused by how to choose useful and authoritative materials. We finally work it out through discuss and brainstorm. I can say that group discuss is so helpful and productive that can solve problems that one person couldn’t handle. Internet is an efficient tool in learning as long as one knows how to search effectively. |
| Evidence: | “呼啸山庄 简介[Introduction to Wuthering Heights]” “呼啸山庄读后感 [reflection on WH]”“呼啸山庄评析[analysis of WH]”等 [etc.] |

U17-DOC/LD-LN, 20/04/09 (brackets added)

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Topic: | Wuthering Heights |
| Objectives: | Things Related to Wuthering Heights |
| Location: | dorm |
| Context: | individual |
| Online tools: | baidu / google |
| Experience: | search large numbers of materials in the net, selection of those materials is quite a different [difficult] job, I spent most of time doing it. then make PPT is easy to me |
| Evidence: | http://www.raifiction.raifiction.it/raifictionarticolo/0,,2401,00.html http://edu.533.com/yylw/2008-04-15/9288.html 百度呼啸山庄贴吧[Baidu site for Wuthering Heights], 艾米丽勃朗特[Emily Bronte], 勃朗特姐妹[The Bronte sisters] |

U17-DOC/LD-WXY, 22/04/09 (brackets added)

Both diaries recorded using search engines for preparation, and highlighted difficulties such as selecting and evaluating the quality of materials. Being initially unfamiliar with the literature, both used Chinese keywords and searched Chinese materials. What Student LN did not mention in the diary was that the group discussion also used Chinese as the working language most of the time, as was observed on several occasions and through informal talks. In the second diary, Student WXY downloaded screenshots of the film.

6.6.4 Summary

The above case presentation shows the complexity of the context in implementing an Internet-mediated approach to teaching literature in CHS' classes. Compared with the other cases reported previously, this case has some distinct characteristics as highlighted below:

- Lack of institutional policy and practice for incorporating Internet technologies in teaching and learning;
- CHS's great initiative and effort to adopt Internet technologies;
- CHS's awareness of the importance of cultivating students' affective development;
- No 'native speaker' involvement;

- Students' low self-esteem about themselves and the institution;
- Students' intentionally selective use of Internet tools for the purpose of convenience rather than intercultural learning;
- Students' lack of motivation to use the Internet for online discussion;
- Discussion forum used as a platform for self-expression (monologues) rather than dialogues between participants, lacking interactivity and reflective thinking;
- Technological provision and support less than satisfactory.

Through peer teaching the teacher attempted to de-centralise her role in teaching in order to empower the class to develop autonomous learning with her guidance. The students needed to make a greater effort not only to understand the texts but also to explore the world with an investigative mind.

An important element is the engagement of students' individual culture – their life experience, perspectives, and practices – in the interaction. Initially, although there was no clear goal of relating the literature course to developing ICC, CHS intuitively emphasised the affective aspect of intercultural competence, which helped her classes to relate the literature to their own life experiences and understandings. This interdiscourse communication (Scollon and Scollon 2001a, b) between CHS and her students worked, to a large degree, to encourage students to use the English language for communication at a personal level, regardless of the presence or absence of native speakers of English. By using the Internet, the students were mobilised to some degree in learning and participation, especially when online resources were incorporated into instruction such as online learning games and audio-visual representation.

On the negative side, while it was relatively easy for students to use the Internet as a source of culturally authentic materials, it seemed challenging to maintain online activities such as a discussion forum. The online discussion in the Moodle site was only open to the class and largely used as a platform for monologic self-expression. There was little evidence of developing dialogues, internal or between participants; students thought they would be more willing to discuss when input from native speakers was made available. If they had participated in an established online community in which English literature was discussed, they would have been able to obtain external perspectives to balance their own.

Finally, assessment remained a significant issue. Peer assessment, which is reported as equally problematic elsewhere (Roberts 2006), was rejected by students despite the teacher's willingness to downplay her authority to a certain degree. Interestingly, while students appeared not committed enough to have online discussions, especially at the start, some became proactive in negotiating and framing the assessment scheme with the teacher, which indicates that autonomy should be co-constructed and actioned within a community.

6.7 *Analysis of the cases*

In this chapter, four cases were presented and discussed in terms of their institutional contexts, teachers' and students' perceptions of Internet-mediated activities, the pedagogical processes that involved Internet use both in and after class, and the technological environments. Table 6.16 summarises these notes of each case in four categories, i.e. institutional, individual, pedagogical and technological.

| Cases | Institutional | Individual | Pedagogical | Technological |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| 1. U4 – <i>Intensive Reading</i> with occasional Internet use | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Centre of English Education’s target of teaching some non-English majors with English major standards • The Centre’s investment in digital resource purchase • The Centre’s offer to students of pre-paid cards for free use of the computers and network | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The informant teachers attach importance to integrated language skills • Students’ needs identical to the teaching goal • Students’ belief that it is beneficial to follow teachers’ instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture is an added-on component to integrated skills in language programmes • Teacher-led instruction with occasional student presentation • Language-focused learning • Rarely direct use of the Internet in class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Internet accessible in class but not often used • Intranet available as a resource bank • Pre-paid cards for free access to computer network on campus given but not used sufficiently |
| 2. U22 – <i>Business English</i> and intercultural wiki | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Language Centre adopting a British educational system • Institutional focus on English for academic and specific purposes • More international staff than Chinese staff • Regular extracurricular activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent communication between teachers and students • Teachers responsive to students’ needs and concerns • Students’ high expectations due to their plans to study abroad • Students preference for ‘native-speaker’ teachers • Students’ adaptation to a new educational culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers’ collaborative efforts for learning materials preparation with wide use of authentic audio-visual resources • Students’ regular use of the search engines for external resources for group presentations • A wiki space for cross-site communication piloted but with low participation due to lack of constant facilitation and interaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cost of Internet use covered by tuition fees • Computer rooms and network easily accessible • Intranet available for information delivery • Official email accounts frequently used by all teachers and students |

To be continued...

| Cases | Institutional | Individual | Pedagogical | Technological |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| 3. U14 – Google Groups-mediated <i>Cultural Analysis of Film</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intercultural Institute directed by American staff Master's level programmes focusing on intercultural studies theory and research, not language proficiency-oriented Google services used as an institution-wide convention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The informant teacher's understanding of ICC in terms of critical thinking The teacher's awareness of pitfalls in the use of Internet information and communication tools Regular communication between teachers and students via email Students' heavy workloads as postgraduates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No use of the Internet in class The informant teacher's practice of using Google Groups for discussion The teacher's minimal online intervention in forum discussion but readiness to provide resources Students posting papers in the discussion forum without interaction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Internet connection available in the teaching buildings Both library and residential network use charged |
| 4. U17 – Moodle-mediated <i>English Literature</i> class | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Department programmes sports-oriented Lack of departmental interest in and support in incorporating Internet technologies in teaching and learning ICC not a clear goal in the institutional agenda | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The informant teacher's enthusiasm in engaging students to use an e-forum in the literature class The teacher's awareness of students' affective development through literature analysis The teacher's constant support for her students' group work Students' low confidence in the institution and their career prospects Students lack of motivation to use Moodle | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher's lecturing involving direct use of Internet resources Students' presentations involving indirect use of online resources Discussion forum used as a platform for self-expression (monologues) between participants, lacking reflective thinking Discussion for assessment purposes Little online intervention by the teacher in forum discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No institutional network provided for pedagogical use Internet accessible in the multimedia classroom Both library and residential network use charged Slow and unstable network connection at residence |

Table 6.17 An overview of the key characteristics of the four cases

In Case 1, the Centre of English Education in U4 itself was surrounded by the university's multicultural environment of a large number of international students, which seemed conducive to intercultural encounters. Students acknowledged that they enjoyed studying in this university and that it was convenient to have language partners. Although the students were non-English majors, some followed an English Major curriculum which was required by the Centre. Both students and teachers strongly believed that their priority in language programmes was to develop integrated language skills, seeing culture as background knowledge. The Centre encouraged students with some pre-paid hours for making use of networked learning resources. However, students did not seem to value this opportunity because the hardware facility on campus was considered unsatisfactory. While digital materials were preferred, there was almost no direct use of Internet tools in class, nor for other organised activities. The greatest use of Internet technologies for pedagogical use was in searching for resources as external input into teachers' lesson planning (and students' presentations), and in both cases this took place outside the class. Teachers and students occasionally contacted each other via class email accounts and, more socially, online networking.

In U22, the English Language Centre was rich in international resources in terms of staff and operation, adopting the British educational system. To the Centre, intercultural communication was not merely a concept learned from the textbook, but a living experience that the students participated in everyday. The pedagogical goal was to develop students' English proficiency in line with the academic standard. Students, for their part, seemed willing to conform to this standard since they had plans for study abroad, i.e. in the UK. Teachers, including the Chinese ones, were all familiar with British educational practices. They maintained frequent communication with students through scheduled tutoring and officially-allocated email accounts, as well as extra-curricular activities. In

their pedagogical practice, teachers were flexible about textbook use and often collaboratively adapted the teaching materials with online resources, especially audio-visual clips. The Business English case showed that using YouTube, which uploaded many British video clips, was standard practice. Students were engaged in regular project-based learning such as group work and presentations which also involved the frequent use of Internet resources. There was an attempt to establish telecollaboration with a British university via an Internet wiki site but due to lack of guidance and maintenance participation remained inactive. Many students did have online contact with their seniors who had been to the UK but communication was in Chinese.

In Case 3 of U14, the Intercultural Institute provided postgraduate-level programmes which were led by American professionals. The Institute customarily used Google as a means of communication within the Faculty and with students, despite the fact that no Internet connection was available in the teaching buildings on campus. Although most programmes were cognitively theory-loaded, developing students' intercultural competence both at the theoretical and practical levels was the institutional goal. The course, *Cultural Analysis of Film*, encouraged students to develop critical thinking, empathy and visual literacy through watching films from different cultural backgrounds. The class used Google Groups as an extended discussion forum outside the class, in addition to lecturing, discussion and student presentation in the classroom, where the Internet was completely inaccessible. As the teacher was clear about the potential disadvantages and risks of using Internet information and communication tools, he carefully articulated the use of the online discussion forum with detailed guidance. Students posted reflective essays for assessment but they did not seem to engage in dialogues, partly because of their focus on the assessment purpose and partly due to heavy workload. Outside the class, students also worked in pairs for presentation tasks, which

involved the use of search engines and professional websites provided by the teacher.

Communication was maintained with and assistance was sought from the teacher whenever required.

With regard to Case 4, the English Department in U17 did not receive much attention from the university, which is sports-oriented by nature. The Department characterised itself as offering English programmes for sports but did not have a clear goal of ICC development. Nor did it attach importance to using the Internet for language teaching and learning. The teacher of the English Literature course seemed to be the only person who was interested in Internet-mediated language teaching and encouraged her classes to use online resources and Moodle as an online site for extended discussion and reflection through literature learning. She cared about her students' affective development in addition to the linguistic appreciation of masterpieces. In spite of their low self-esteem as English majors in U17, and without much exposure to communication with 'native speakers', the students of the literature classes regarded their teacher as a considerate and sympathetic staff member. Whereas a multimedia classroom with Internet connection could be used for in-class teaching, including lecturing with the use of online resources, it was not accessible for after-class online activities. Without their own computer room, the students chose to pay for the use of the Internet at their residential halls as well as in the library's computer centre, although the latter was a less favourable choice due to its limited space. While requesting online discussion for assessment purposes, the teacher was flexible and responsive to students' needs and opinions with regard to assessment criteria. Although not all the students were positive about taking part in online discussion, many students remained participative. However, the discussions were not dialogic but full of self-expression and monologues. In the course of preparing for group presentations, students tended to opt for the convenience of searching online materials in Chinese rather than in

English so as to understand the literature texts and comments without using up too much of their time.

Comparing these cases under the same framework of Intercultural Communication, in which Internet mediation is engaged, it is obvious that they differ greatly in their institutional situations. Among them, the literature classes in Case 4 (U17) have an institutional context which is the most monocultural (used in the national sense), followed by the intensive reading classes in Case 1 (U4) which, however, shares the multicultural environment of a language university. In Cases 2 (U22) and 3 (U14), on the contrary, staff members become the primary source of intercultural communication whereas external input seems rare. Technically, U22 offers the most convenient access to computers and the Internet and makes the use of the network an integral part of campus life. The Centre of English Education of U4 seems more generous in that it offers students some pre-paid hours for using the university computer network, compared with U14 and U17, in which computers and Internet access are under-provided.

With regard to the pedagogical aspect, the Intercultural Institute in U14 has a distinctive goal of enhancing students' ICC, whereas the other three do not seem to have a clear goal, implicitly seeing ICC either as human affective development (U17), as an ability that can be developed automatically through experiential communication (U22) or as cultural background notes (U4). While the teaching focuses differ to a large degree, the pedagogical practices, mediated with the use of Internet technologies, seem to share some common ground. It has been identified that despite the variation in Internet tools selected, in Cases 2, 3, and 4 teachers all attach importance to group work and student presentation methods as a way of organising learning activities. The standard procedure is that students firstly team/pair up to prepare some pre-determined topics for presentation, then conduct

considerable online searching activities and group discussion. When it comes to class presentation, students use PowerPoint slides to demonstrate their group work. In Cases 3 and 4, online discussions, i.e. Google Groups and Moodle respectively, are organised with assessment purposes in mind and students have a higher level of participation, in contrast to the students in Case 2, where there is no such official requirement for online discussion, given that the unsuccessful intercultural wiki platform is voluntary. In Case 1, although direct evidence is not available, it can be judged from teachers' and students' accounts that there are occasional student presentation tasks, which are similar to the Case 2 scenario. However, there is no evidence of online discussion for pedagogical purposes, although some social networking platforms (e.g. Xiaonei, QQ and Fetion Zones) are available.

Individually, in Cases 1 and 2 teachers seem to engage less with students' use of Internet tools for organised pedagogical activities, as there is no fixed online environment for their students, compared with their colleagues (CW and CHS respectively) in Cases 3 and 4, who make great efforts to extend their classroom teaching for the purpose of enhancing peer learning. Students, on the other hand, while unanimously agreeing that using online resources is essential, show quite contradictory attitudes towards the use of communication tools such as forums, wikis and Moodle. Basically, some like and some dislike them for various reasons. However, one thing students have in common is that they do seem to aspire to meaningful and well-organised online activities, with good resources and facilitation, although they do not welcome assessment-based tasks. However, they do not have a good definition of what makes an activity 'meaningful' and in Case 4 students do admit that without the assessment requirement, they would probably choose not to participate in online discussion. At the same time, they are less willing to take the initiative or respond to each other, which implies that interdiscourse communication (between students) does not automatically take place just because they are using Internet tools. It is

obvious that students prefer more intercultural communication directly with ‘native speakers’, either online or on-site. Interestingly, for practical reasons (e.g. easy online reading and comprehension), students prefer to search and read learning materials in both languages, which indicates that there is a level of cross-cultural learning mediated by online information tools such as search engines and browsers.

To sum up, commonality among the four cases examined is not total, but in all the cases Internet mediation is present in some degree. Also, among the four factors, i.e. institutional, technological, pedagogical and individual, the last two play a decisive role in shaping the use of Internet tools and the development of Internet-mediated teaching and learning activities in various forms.

6.8 Summary

Overall, this chapter has illustrated four cases which were distinct from each other institutionally, individually, pedagogically and technologically, to various degrees. It can be seen that all the cases were context-specific and complex in nature. In each case, some relevant and important snapshots of Internet-mediated pedagogical practices were selected and presented in great detail for close examination. They were discussed in line with the Intercultural Communication framework and attention was paid to the pedagogical and individual roles in the use of the Internet both in and out of class, with the intention to examine how the pedagogy was mediated by Internet use. There seems no absolute commonality between the four cases, as discussed above. However, this does not indicate that no generalisations can be made. On the contrary, some interesting sub-commonalities have been identified and these will be further discussed in Chapter 7 in relation to the broader literature and the research questions. I will ask whether these Internet-mediated practices can lead to an intercultural approach to teaching and learning.

Chapter 7 Discussion

7.1 *Introduction*

In this chapter, I first review the main findings from the data analysed in the survey and case studies as presented in Chapters 5 and 6. I examine these findings in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter 2 and evaluate the results in connection with the research questions. These questions are:

- RQ1: How are the ICC dimensions manifested in the language class?
- RQ2: What Internet tools are used for language activities?
- RQ3: How is the use of Internet tools shaped by the local context of education?
- RQ4: Can the Internet-mediated practices evidenced in the study facilitate an intercultural approach to teaching and learning?

Based on the discussion of the findings and answers to the research questions, I further propose a framework for intercultural language activities using Internet technologies, combining the current Internet-mediated intercultural teaching and learning practices at the tertiary level in China with existing models and practices (Section 2.4.3). I also seek to derive from the research general principles for applying this framework for the purpose of undertaking systematic Internet-mediated intercultural language activities.

7.2 *Review of the main findings*

The findings arose from data analysis from the two stages of fieldwork, i.e., the survey and the case studies. In the first stage, investigation covered the English Major education strand,

College English education strand, and Distance education strand. In the case studies, while the first two strands were retained, the last sector was not included due to practical constraints. Instead, an international partnership university was added as a result of opportunity sampling.

7.2.1 Main findings from the survey

7.2.1.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaire data covers teachers' and students' perceptions and practices regarding the use of Internet technologies in language activities. Both the teachers and the students saw the adoption of Internet technologies in language classes as a positive development, although applications in real-life contexts differed considerably. Communicating with partners from the target culture remained a high expectation but an infrequent reality. Neither the teachers nor the students seemed worried about the potential challenges they could face when communicating with their target partners. However, the teachers had greater uncertainty but lower anxiety than their students when considering the impact of Internet use in language classes. Teachers believed that it was their responsibility to help their students to use the Internet for learning, from providing learning materials, through facilitating learning and intercultural communication, to examining learning outcomes. Most of the students also agreed that they should take responsibility in locating language and culture materials. However, far fewer students than teachers thought it was important for students to be skilled in Internet use.

The data show that despite the fact that Internet use has become part of life and work for both groups, the teachers spent more time everyday on the Internet than did the students and the teachers had more opportunities for training. Nearly half of the teachers received

training and the trained teachers were more likely to engage in Internet use in teaching. Activities ranged from frequent improvised use of individual Internet tools to integrated use. In language classes as elsewhere, the teachers and the students used information tools more often than communication tools, mainly for the purpose of finding up-to-date and authentic language and cultural materials from the target culture, as well as from the home culture as a secondary source. Using individual Internet tools, represented by using search engines, browsers, and audio-video resources, was much more common than using teaching platforms. The teachers used communication tools, particularly email, to maintain contact with their students and also to engage their students in class-based discussion, although students showed less interest. Synchronous communication tools remained little used in general, except for chat. The levels of use of Internet tools made by students did not differ greatly according to whether they used them in-class or out-of-class.

The main barriers to conducting Internet-mediated activities were reported differently by teachers and students, the former ranking time management as the most serious concern and financial consideration the least whereas the latter put inadequate collaborative experience at the top and network access issues at the bottom.

7.2.1.2 Documents

Textual analysis showed that at the institutional level, for English Majors, ICC could be generalised to two domains, i.e. language proficiency and socio-cultural knowledge, although a consistent framework for ICC goals was lacking and ICC itself was mixed with other descriptors such as intercultural awareness and cultural literacy. Cultural knowledge predominantly referred to that of English-speaking countries, with occasional inclusion of Chinese culture. This was reflected in programme set-ups, mainly including language-focused and culture-oriented courses. *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication* courses,

introducing concepts, theories and applications, were optional. The requirement for student computer literacy varied from institution to institution. Some institutions set up self-access centres as a means to enhance students' independent learning and information literacy.

In the College English education strand, educational targets seemed more consistent in documentary descriptions. Nation-wide reform shifted its focus from reading to listening and speaking, attaching great importance to independent learning by capitalising on information technology. ICC was generically equated to 'integrative cultural literacy' as a broad aim, or cultural knowledge of the society and its people. On the whole, it was subordinate to language proficiency. This was clearly evidenced by the main set course books which were all language-focused and reading-based, with cultural notes merely attached to unit texts. *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication* courses were set up as optional, in response to the reform goal of enhancing students' all-round development. Reform in teaching and assessment schemes tended to emphasise the learning process, by integrating classroom teaching, computer/network facilities and activity design. Assessment schemes increasingly embraced both formative and summative elements, although to varying degrees. In addition to these official efforts, there was one example of creating an online flexible learning space for students' course-related extracurricular activities.

In the Distance education strand, only one *Cross-cultural Communication* course file was obtained. Unlike the above two strands, the course was a core component, using textbook-based materials as well as online learning and discussion methods (both synchronous and asynchronous). The formative component outweighed the summative assessment. Its main goal was to enhance students' intercultural competence and raise their awareness of intercultural misunderstandings. Although there were no partners from the target culture, it

claimed that communicating in the target language among students was an effective way of understanding the knowledge and skills associated with intercultural communication.

7.2.1.3 Observations

Observations of physical settings showed that language labs were replaced by multimedia and computer classrooms, most of which were Internet accessible, although often controlled by the teacher's computer. These rooms usually accommodated normal classes while fully-equipped lecture rooms or auditoriums could deal with large and merged classes. Except for computer clusters/self-access centres where out-of-class access was possible, computer and network access in classrooms was only for scheduled sessions.

Online and virtual learning environments displayed a great diversity, including institution-based Web pages for resources, campus-wide e-forums or club activities, LAN-based course websites, independent teaching blogs, wikis, Second Life, and learning platforms such as Blackboard, Moodle and WebCT, for administrative and teaching and learning purposes.

The two classroom observations demonstrated how teachers and students interacted in class with activities mediated by Internet technologies. The U11 example showed that in a small *Extensive Reading* class the teacher pre-downloaded resources (textual, audio-visual) from the Internet for lesson plans, with occasional use of search engines in class. The U13 example, however, was a very large merged class. The teacher did not include any Internet use in class, nor did she prepare online materials for the class. Instead, as a routine, student groups gave presentations on any topics that they were interested in. These groups searched the Internet for resources to support their presentations in the form of PowerPoint slides.

7.2.1.4 Interviews

In both English Major education and College English education strands, since there was no nation-wide ICC framework, teachers' interpretations of it were largely individual, influenced by, but not necessarily conforming to, institutional descriptions. Typical views fell into the cognitive domain, seeing the goal of ICC as teaching knowledge about the social cultures of English-speaking countries and intercultural communication theories and practices. There was an emerging recognition of the value of teaching Chinese cultures through English. Teaching culture or intercultural communication through cross-cultural comparison and critical incident analysis was the conventional practice, although there were other ways such as skill-oriented role plays and simulations. However, since such efforts were not recognised through assessment and examinations, tests of cultural knowledge from the textbooks remained the usual choice.

The Internet was involved in teaching, to a greater or lesser degree. On the teachers' side, searching resources, and referencing to and providing good teaching materials, were the most common ways in which this was done. Except on the JPKC programmes (Section 1.4.3) teachers seldom published their courses to institutional websites. Maintaining contact with students through email was a frequent practice while setting up class blogs was also becoming more widespread. On the students' part, getting access to websites containing English learning materials and exploring professional websites for learning resources was the main concern, whether the websites were China-based or not. Many students were active in participating in online forums and communities through chat networking software. However, such activities were rarely learning-oriented.

The problems in using the Internet for teaching and learning, especially intercultural communication, varied from pedagogical limitations to practical constraints. On the one hand, the use of courseware-based materials did not enrich the language class, nor create an engaging autonomous learning environment. On the other hand, how to find useful and suitable materials among the huge amount of online information remained the serious concern of teachers and students who both realised that selecting and evaluating good materials was a time-consuming task. While many teachers believed that students should be more competent in information literacy, students seemed more reliant on their teachers to provide learning resources from the Internet. In fact, both wished for a 'comprehensive resource bank' although they knew it remained only an ideal. Interestingly, this absence of a 'common bank of high-end' materials is not uncommon among teachers and students in other places such as the UK (see Toner et al. 2008: 15). The majority of the teachers agreed that it was more viable to engage students to use asynchronous tools such as forums outside class than in class due to time constraints. Technical and financial problems were two other main concerns.

In the Distance Education strand, examples from the two Open Universities showed that they had both had experience in engaging external participants in their culture teaching programmes, with U21 inviting some foreign volunteers to participate in the BBS discussion with students, and U16 taking a telecollaboration with an American partner class. However, neither effort lasted for long, owing to various reasons such as Internet security and accessibility, different cultures of pedagogy and teaching management, and the lack of technical support. In the case of the Institute of Distance Education (U14-affiliated), it followed a traditional approach of offering both face-to-face and distance teaching modes; no evidence of intercultural teaching and learning was found.

7.2.2 Main findings from the case studies

Compared with the survey findings, the case studies provide a much more detailed picture of how Internet-mediated intercultural language activities were carried out within specific institutional contexts. In Chapter 6, the four cases were presented in sequence from the least to the greatest pedagogical use of the internet. Each case has been built up with 'a reasonably detailed picture of the sequence in which events took place and of the context in which they occurred', followed by a fuller account with 'cross-case comparisons' (de Vaus 2001: 227-8). This section summarises the four cases with Internet-mediated intercultural language activities highlighted, as shown in Table 7.1.

Case 1 resembled the College English education strand, although the Centre of English Education adopted the English Major education standard in the first two years. The Centre had good Internet access in classrooms and students were offered free hours of network access. Case 2 was an example of an international partnership institute, which adopted its UK partner's administrative and academic regulations. The English Language Centre, consisting of international staff members, designed EAP and ESP programmes for all students enrolled and offered sufficient computer/Internet access without separate charge. In Case 3, the Intercultural Institute, co-staffed by US and Chinese scholars, offered an array of programmes for language-oriented postgraduates. Although there was no provision of Internet access in classrooms, the institution used Gmail service as its method of communication among the faculty and students. The course *Cultural Analysis of Films* required participation in online forum discussion. In Case 4, the English Department belongs to a university specialising in sports science and education. Although the institutional provision of Internet access was less than ideal, the Department had two multimedia classrooms. The *English Literature* course was the only one that required students' participation in Moodle-mediated forum discussion.

| | |
|---|--|
| Case 1 | <i>U4 – Intensive Reading with occasional Internet use</i> |
| <i>Teachers (Chinese)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting searched and selected materials (figures and graphics) from the Internet as background information • Networking with student online social community (covertly and overtly) in order to update their knowledge about students' interest in possible discussion topics |
| <i>Students (Bachelor -level College English)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching the Internet for information • Exploring the campus network-based digital platforms and courseware for learning materials |
| Case 2 | <i>U22 – Business English and intercultural wikis</i> |
| <i>Teachers (Chinese + overseas)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining contact and networking with students through a virtual environment (Moodle-based) and an institutional email system • Searching and referencing regularly to professional websites for materials to be adapted for lesson plans and, in some cases, recommendation to students • Piloting an intercultural wiki project with a UK partner |
| <i>Students (Bachelor -level non- English)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching the Internet for information (individually and collectively) and presenting group work in class • Exploring websites and discussing online learning materials recommended by teachers • Making consultations with their tutors through email • Interacting with UK partners through wikis (<i>non-interactive</i>) |
| Case 3 | <i>U14 – Cultural Analysis of Film and Google Groups-mediated forum</i> |
| <i>Teacher (US)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining contact and networking with students through Group - mediated forum and Gmail system • Searching and referencing regularly to professional websites and recommending to students • Scheduling online pair work and moderating online discussion |
| <i>Students (Master- level English)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching the Internet for information (mostly individually) • Exploring the websites and learning materials recommended by the teacher and presenting pair work in class • Consulting with the teacher and discussing with partners on presentation work through email • Expressing personal perspectives with comparisons and reflections on the films watched through online forum |
| Case 4 | <i>U17- English Literature and Moodle-mediated forum</i> |
| <i>Teacher (Chinese)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining contact and networking with students through Moodle • Searching and referencing regularly to professional websites for materials to be adapted to lesson plans • Scheduling online pair work and moderating online discussion • Commenting/discussing online posts in class (occasionally) |
| <i>Students (Bachelor -level English)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching the Internet for information (individually and collectively) and presenting group work in class • Expressing personal perspectives, comparing and relating literary works to their life through online forum • Discussing/negotiating assessment criteria through forum |

Table 7.1 Internet-mediated practices of intercultural language teaching and learning

The main findings from the four case studies showed that despite the varied contexts and programmes, they shared some similar practices in using the Internet for intercultural language activities. Firstly, locating and exploring information from professional websites were frequent and regular activities. Secondly, teachers and students maintained contact mainly through email and online networking. Thirdly, engaging students in pair/group presentations on specified or recommended topics appeared common practice (except for Case 1 where no direct observation was made). Fourthly, setting up an online learning environment emerged as a way of extending in-class discussion and furthering the aspiration to establish intercultural exchange. Fifthly, asynchronous communication tools were evidently employed differently to synchronous ones (excluding Case 1). Lastly, with regard to both forum discussions, students predominantly used the forum as a medium to express their own ideas; interaction with each other was rarely evidenced.

These findings from the survey and case studies have produced a multi-dimensional canvas of the interwoven threads which comprise current Internet-mediated intercultural language education in China, or to be more precise, in part of China (see the map of fieldwork in Chapter 4).

7.3 Discussion

Having reviewed the findings briefly, I now address the issues raised by the survey data (Section 5.4.1), together with the findings that arise from case studies, within Nunan's (1989: 10-1) task framework. As argued in Chapters 2 and 3, this framework is considered structurally clear and appropriate for developing and analysing an intercultural classroom, as critically proposed by Corbett (2003: 41-6). There are originally six components (i.e. goal, settings, input, activities, teacher's role, and learner's role) but here I combine the

teacher's role and the learner's role under the same subheading because interactions depend on both. Under the activities component in the framework, I also consider the factor of assessment, which is an important and relevant issue to activities.

7.3.1 Issues from the survey and case studies

On the whole, from both the survey and the case studies, it seems that teachers rely on textbooks as the main source of cultural information while keeping the Internet as a secondary source and tool; the use of the Internet is primarily outside the class. At the same time, students learn about the target culture via reading cultural notes from the textbook and the affiliated CD-ROMs, from the teacher and from the Internet. From the case studies (except Case 1), an integrated use of course materials and Internet tools for different pedagogical purposes and practices has been identified. Although these efforts may be individual rather than representative, they illustrate potential changes to Internet-mediated intercultural language activities in Chinese tertiary foreign language education. The challenges involved in adopting these practices, and in the general issues identified in the survey, should not be underestimated. In these challenges, pedagogical and practical concerns interlink.

7.3.1.1 The issue of ICC goals

The first challenge is, as discussed in Section 5.4.1, that the manifestations of ICC goals are somewhat vague, and varied at different levels owing to the lack of a consistent ICC framework. Documents and teachers mostly agree upon the teaching of the cognitive domain of ICC in terms of knowledge about people and society from the target culture and the awareness of different cultural behaviours and perspectives. Teachers specialising in *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication* courses tend to focus more on the concepts and

theories, with an interest in engaging in critical incident analysis in class so as to raise their students' awareness. Elsewhere, ICC is defined generically as an ultimate goal, together with other notions such as integrative cultural literacy, all-round ability and versatile talents.

While all the above interpretations of ICC are contextually justifiable, it is all the more important to establish a systematic conceptual framework to define clearly the basic concepts and to delineate the overarching goal and its sub-goals. In this research, the concept of culture in FLE should be understood as a construct that not only contains socio-cultural knowledge of the concerned target groups, but also the individual person's interpretations of their experiences. Likewise, intercultural communication should be seen as a dynamic process of both personal engagements and social experience within concerned groups. In contexts such as long-term language learning with the aim of all-round ability development, Dörnyei (2001: 26) advises that a set of clearly defined sub-goals which are manageable and limited is more desirable than an 'umbrella' goal. If ICC is the overall goal, Byram's (1997) intercultural competence components (Section 2.3.3.2), or objectives, provide the basis for 'the most fully worked-out model' (Corbett 2003: 31), many of which are identical to the ICC descriptors in the Chinese FLE guidelines (Section 1.3.2) and have been widely applied in online intercultural language projects not only in Europe and North America (O'Dowd 2006, 2007a, b) but also in other places such as Asia (e.g. Liaw 2006), despite its perception of culture remaining focused on national groups. In this sense, textbook materials can be organised around these pivotal components as goals. The specific language activities, including the Internet-mediated ones, can be designed consistently. This does not mean that the language programmes and activities should bear all the ICC components. Rather, each programme or activity may focus on certain aspects of the intercultural competence objectives within an overall ICC framework.

7.3.1.2 *The issue of authenticity*

The second challenge relates to the views on accessing ‘authentic’ resources, including learning materials and native speakers. In both survey and case studies data, it is noticeable that there was a heavy emphasis and reliance on using valid, ‘authentic’ materials from the target culture in contrast to using home-based cultural resources presented in the target language as input. Language quality in the materials may be the reason. However, this bias against home-based materials may not justify the exclusion of home or other cultures. Following the ICC concept (Byram 1997; O’Dowd 2006) and Scollon and Scollon’s (2001a, b) interdiscourse communication concept, teachers and students need to include interpersonal and intra-group communication in their understanding of the concept of authenticity, by using the target language within their own community. This suggests that both teachers and students need to develop a non-essentialist perspective, or a small culture paradigm (Holliday 1999), to look at authenticity.

One way forward may be to shift from the notion of ‘authenticity’ to ‘intercultural authenticity’ (Feng and Byram 2002), as a way of striking a balance between the home and target cultures, as well as other cultures. From this perspective, selecting online materials should adopt the four principles Feng and Byram (ibid.: 63) stress, i.e. ‘intercultural representations’, ‘mediation of intention and interpretation’, ‘balance of diachrony and synchrony and image representations’, and ‘principles of contrivance’ (Section 2.3.3.4). Setting up online intercultural exchanges seems to be the preferred choice (O’Dowd 2007a). In the current investigation, teachers held that it was ideal for their students to communicate with interlocutors from the target culture. However, most of the classes did not have the opportunity of having overseas teachers in their classes, as U22 did, both face-to-face and online. Although an alternative may be to join online established communities

such as a chat group, a BBS forum and a listserv, it is equally important to construct intra-class communication as a way of intercultural authentic communication. This may mitigate the limitations of using the Internet as a resource bank with a view to collecting ‘authentic’ information on cultural products and practices. Such a limited approach may be inadequate to provide students with the investigatory tools and skills to achieve an understanding of the perspectives (Moore et al. 1998; Warschauer et al. 2000) from the target culture, as well as other cultures.

Internet-mediated methods stand a chance of expanding intercultural communication through accessing multicultural materials and perspectives (e.g. established forums). In this way, teachers and students can potentially not only find useful materials for language activities in class, but also to interact, both collectively and individually, with different voices and opinions from outside the class.

7.3.1.3 The issue of autonomous learning

Developing learner autonomy has been advocated as one of the important educational targets and is closely associated with the promotion of online courseware platforms for classroom teaching and out-of-class ‘autonomous learning’, especially in the College English education strand. The content focuses on language knowledge and textual meanings in the textbook units, and the completion of online (campus network) learning records is a prerequisite for credits. An unspoken motive for such an initiative, according to a forum discussion (Xujiajin, 30/04/2008), is primarily to deal with a shortage of teachers which has arisen through rapidly expanding enrolment. As it has been implemented as a matter of policy, students have no choice but to carry out ‘autonomous learning’ in a rigid process that embeds behaviourist CALL programme design. Such learning does not involve any free use of the Internet for searching or communication, but

it can be the case, in the way vividly described by Zhang and Li (2008: 218-29) in their evaluation of a courseware platform, that an in-built communication tool remains an 'empty shell' function with many students cheating by logging onto the platform for the required period of time without working further with the content. Another type of online course platform, i.e. JPKC programmes, is officially required for the purpose of sharing quality materials that are accredited by the authority. Typically, online spaces are used as a means of course dissemination, rather than as a new, rich context of communication in themselves (White 2003: 216, in O'Dowd 2007b: 19). However, in reality, except for a demo version that includes course information and materials, even this type of platform does not guarantee online instruction and communication (Chen, personal communication, 27/07/2010).

These two examples suggest that online learning methods in formal education are inevitably rejected when students work alone and are physically isolated, because the social aspects of on-campus study play an important role that students are unwilling to forego (Zemsky and Massy 2004, in O'Dowd 2007b: 21). Zemsky and Massy (*ibid.*) also find that successful e-learning usually involves group work around computer screens in the classroom, using online content as a stimulus for face-to-face and online collaboration and discussion. This is partially evidenced in Cases 2, 3 and 4. This clearly argues for a socio-cultural approach to language learning and use in the Internet-mediated learning environment. Hence, learner autonomy refers to not only the development of strategies for independent learning, but also fostering positive attitudes and cognitive abilities of interpersonal communication and collaboration. In this sense, an experiential learning approach (Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen and Lehtovaara 2001) seems appropriate, serving this purpose by creating language and intercultural encounters through Internet mediation to co-construct learning experiences with community autonomy, or group autonomy

(Mangenot and Nissen 2006). This community autonomy is essentially a kind of social autonomy (Holliday 2003, 2005), entailing learner autonomy (Little 2007) and teacher autonomy (Lewis 2006), at the individual level as well as the collective level. This effect could be amplified by setting up an online community and extending its contact to external professional communities for intercultural exchange (Gu and Xu 1999/2006; Fang 2006; Gu 2006; Corbett 2010).

7.3.1.4 The issue of assessment

Although assessment is not the focus of this research, it does not mean that this issue should not be addressed. The documents seem to encourage, in principle, a shift from adopting wholly summative assessment to a balance of summative and formative components. With Internet mediation, formative assessment naturally includes participation and performance in online activities such as forum discussion. In practice, this seems problematic. Debski (2006: 30) asserts that despite the potential for using online discussion forums to extend classroom contact and learning engagement, teachers may often find that ‘students are reluctant to make contributions to the forum. Even giving them marks for it may not always provide encouragement’.

In the case studies, there were examples of using forums such as Google Sites (Case 3) and Moodle (Case 4) for assessment. However, such requirements re-shaped the online forum discussion in such a way that students only contributed in the form of monologues and reflective essays without producing meaningful discussions and social interaction, as evidenced by textual analysis of forum posts. While low participation and unsuccessful communication exist commonly in many forms of Internet-mediated activities, such as telecollaboration (O’Dowd and Ritter 2006), in this study assessment proved to be the key factor. The implementation of peer assessment led to difficulties and consequent

withdrawal from online discussion in Case 4, in contrast to Roberts's (2006) positive findings in their e-learning peer assessment. In Case 3, although no direct disagreement took place between the teacher and his students, in interviews there were some complaints, including one informant's hesitation in agreeing with the practice of online forum participation. Snow (2007: 219) shares a similar feeling:

'some learners would tend to avoid expressing negative opinions about the value of a learning project which the teacher obviously valued... they would have abandoned their use of the online forum if it had not been a required part of the course, and it is likely that other students also shared these sentiments, at least from time to time.'

7.3.1.5 The issue of Internet availability and accessibility

What can be seen from the survey data is that respondents think that technological presences have largely improved the classroom teaching environment in comparison with the old-fashioned chalk and blackboard methods. Most of the classrooms are equipped with computers and many are networked. Computer rooms or self-access centres are commonly established. Occasionally, wireless connection in libraries or study lounges is also available in some institutions. Out-of-hours access to institutional Internet facilities is restricted because of time and security considerations. This situation is similar to what Toner et al. (2008) found when they surveyed student access to language learning laboratories in the UK. Off-campus Internet access has become increasingly available at home and in residence accommodation.

Despite the availability of networked computers in the classroom, student access (as well as teacher access) to computers and the Internet in class seems 'not ready-to-hand and just-

in-time' (Murray 2005: 77). This is depicted in the two examples of classroom observations in Chapter 5 and Case 1 in Chapter 6. The snapshots in Case 1 can be typically summarised as the discipline and concentrated attention of students, and the high pace and intensity of the teacher-centred interaction (Jin and Cortazzi 1998, 2006), computers being 'separate from the main focus of the classroom' (Murray 2005: 77). This evidence indicates that technological availability does not guarantee pedagogical accessibility in class. The other shared constraint on students' Internet access is that on the whole it is not free of charge, despite their paying tuition fees. Only U22 provides inclusive access as it adopts the UK practice. Nevertheless, students tend to see this network access issue as the least serious barrier, according to the questionnaire survey. The cost issue has been a problem for a decade, and it has impeded the integration of the Internet into language programmes (see Gu 2006) but no fundamental changes have been made. Some institutions do offer students limited free time for use (e.g. Case 1), for the purpose of encouraging autonomous learning with courseware-based materials on the Web. However, it is questionable whether this conditional offer helps or inhibits access (see 7.3.1.3).

7.3.1.6 Other issues

One practical issue, which tends to stand 'in the shadows rather than being in the spotlight of attention' (Snow 2007: 218), is the lack of time to use the Internet. In the questionnaire survey teachers ranked it as the most important barrier. In classroom observations from both the survey and case studies teachers did not demonstrate much use of the Internet in class, partly because of their anxieties about having time to cover the syllabus. Even in Cases 3 and 4 the problem of finding time for doing out-of-class online interaction still remained because of the demands of busy schedules.

There are some other issues that adversely affect the integration of the Internet into language activities. These include the national censorship of some Internet websites and functions such as YouTube in China, the Internet security problem such as attacking BBS from an illegal source in U21, and the potential risks of being thought to have politically incorrect views such as the disagreement on 9.11 terrorism in Case 1. As some of the problems are universal, it is beyond my focus to address them in this thesis.

In the following section, I keep my focus on the pedagogical concerns regarding the dynamics of Internet-mediated intercultural language tasks.

7.3.2 Towards Internet-mediated intercultural language tasks

To reduce the complexities, five inter-related factors are highlighted from the above-mentioned issues within an intercultural task framework based on Corbett (2003) and Nunan (1989, 2004). They are presented as goals, input, activities, settings and teachers' and students' roles.

7.3.2.1 Goals

Unlike a communicative task in which the goal is often information exchange for its own sake, Corbett (2003: 22-3) argues that an intercultural language task should first of all set out with the 'why' question, i.e. to teach the students to mimic the 'native speakers' or to be an intercultural speaker. An intercultural approach differs from the communicative approach in that it aims to develop intercultural speakers who can interact with and mediate between different social groups, rather than mimicking 'native-speaker' competence (Byram 1997; Kramsch 1998; Corbett 2003, 2010). In Corbett's (2003: 41) view, intercultural language tasks should entail 'linguistic development' and 'intercultural

exploration', a goal which he further expands by considering the possibilities for intercultural communication and social networking afforded by Internet technologies (Corbett 2010).

Methodologically, the overall ICC goal should be understood as a dynamic, shifting, changing construct created by individuals through communication. Pedagogically, the sub-goals for an intercultural activity should correspond to the nature of the classes and learners' needs (Corbett 2003). This suggests that Internet-mediated language activities are not an *ad hoc* impetus for an intercultural communication experience or an extravagant display of 'authentic' materials, but should serve ICC development consistently to various degrees at its different levels. In the case of U22 (Case 2) because there was no clear pedagogical goal of participating in the intercultural wiki, students on both sides were not willing to maintain participation. This indicates that a vague goal of (online) intercultural exchange will not act effectively as an incentive to students in the long run. In contrast, in U14 (Case 3) an emphasis was put on critical thinking, empathy and reflective thinking relating to students' personal life experience through cultural analysis of films and online discussion. A similar approach was developed with a focus on the affective domain of ICC in Case 4. Both had a clear and consistent goal throughout the course and online activities were sustained (although not without problems). All in all, the ICC goals should not only be prescribed in institutional documents and specified course materials, but also be evident in teachers' plans and practices.

7.3.2.2 Input

Input is often understood as 'the stimulus provided by the teacher for the learning to occur' (Corbett 2003: 42), characteristically dominated by using textbooks, pre-packed courseware, and teachers' self-planned materials from various sources such as the Internet.

However, this view tends to overlook students' potential contribution as input to the intercultural language class. An intercultural approach attaches great importance to enabling language students to decentre, or relativise themselves, in the process of intercultural encounters and mediation with critical cultural awareness (Byram 1997; Block 2007; Corbett 2003, 2010). Therefore, there is no reason why students' own culture should be excluded (Jin and Cortazzi 2006). In Case 3, it can be seen that the teacher asks his class to focus on relating cultural analysis of films to their own life experience in order to contribute reflective essays. This leads to the development of intercultural sensitivity, critical thinking and empathy. In Case 4, the teacher also encouraged her students to invest their own feelings and perspectives into discussions of works of English literature. These students' inputs prove to be important contributions to the learning outcomes as part of their ICC development.

Beyond the issue of motivation, the use of students' own culture, as well as teachers', as input in language activities also reflects the criterion of intercultural representations and its super-ordinate notion of intercultural authenticity (Feng and Byram 2002) as discussed earlier. From the survey it is clear that there is an emergent use, as learning content, of materials about Chinese culture written in English (U2 and U6), another example of intercultural representations. In addition, personal culture as input for interaction with and interpretation of 'official' learning materials may facilitate the formation of non-essentialist ways of seeing culture and intercultural communication, as a consequence of applying a small culture paradigm (Holliday 1999) for interdiscourse communication (Scollon and Scollon 2001a, b; Piller 2007). The engagement of students' and teachers' contemporary cultural perspectives with relatively long-standing classic texts or related resources may also help to mediate the diachronic-synchronic gap of cultural input (Feng and Byram *ibid.*). This said, I do not mean to play down the use of 'authentic' multimedia

materials produced by English-speaking media, or the use of ‘authentic’ communication with language informants from the target culture. This study finds that in accessing online resources, teachers are more inclined to visit authoritative websites like governmental, academic and educational sites, as well as high-profile professional ones. For students, non-textual resources seem more welcoming than textual ones as the former can provide live images and motion such as a film clip (Case 3). The use of input, however, has to be appropriate to the actual intercultural language activities.

7.3.2.3 Activities

Both the survey and case studies have witnessed a range of Internet-mediated activities, most of which are organised out-of-class because of time limitations in class. Corbett (2003: 43) argues that it is viable to employ communicative activity types for intercultural tasks as long as they serve the goals. As such activity types vary, it is impossible to describe them all here. Rather, a broad categorisation will suffice. As discussed in Section 2.4.1.2, Internet-mediated intercultural language activities are broadly of three types, according to the functions of the tools used, namely, non-interactive (for sourcing and referencing information), interactive (for synchronous and asynchronous communication) and networking-oriented (for sharing and community building) (O’Dowd 2007a; Wang and Coleman 2009; Corbett 2010).

In this study, it is evident that Web-oriented activities are the mainstream in tertiary language classes in China, and the majority are undertaken outside the classroom. This makes sense because unprepared use of search engines and other tools may involve risks such as uncertainty of intention and time-wasting. It is understandable that teachers prefer to pre-download audio-visual files to PowerPoint slides or folders and edit textual materials from the Web, for the sake of offline accessibility. Some teachers incorporate

online materials into lesson plans with students' engaging in class (Cases 2 and 4). Other teachers assign student presentations which require the students to work individually and collectively to search, select, synthesise, translate and edit the materials for a final presentation product (often in PowerPoint slides) for their peers. Interactive activities exist in the form of forum discussion, although the 'discussion' function is not fully developed (see Cases 3 and 4). There is no direct observation of cross-site collaboration in spite of my expectations. This absence of telecollaboration is obvious compared with other practices in which CMC-oriented pedagogies such as telecollaborative projects, *Cultura*-based approach and e-tandem learning (Furstenberg et al. 2001; O'Dowd 2003, 2006, 2007a, b; Belz and Thorne 2006) prevail. Networking-orientation, according to the literature (Gao 2007, 2009), is emerging, but is not directly evidenced in this research.

An important issue related to these types of activities is assessment, as observed from Cases 3 and 4. A common approach is that online participation in the forum discussion is requested and students' posts are assessed qualitatively and quantitatively by both of the teachers, as a measure of formative assessment. However, the assessment purpose seems to de-activate the initial intention of fostering meaningful discussions. It is evidenced that discussion forums lack active interactions among classmates. From the students' point of view, Snow (2007: 220) concludes from his experience of enhancing students' self-directed learning that they make a 'conscious decision' to set practical goals such as 'passing tests and not failing the language course, but not attempting to do more than that'. This echoes Wang's (2010) report on applying portfolio assessment to a web-oriented intercultural learning programme in China which suggested that most of the students showed a reluctance to engage, saying 'score first, ability second', despite the fact that a portfolio approach to assessment has been incorporated into national guidelines (MoE 2000). In other activities that involve students' participation in and presentation of

pair/group work, it seems that only the participation record is assessed while the quality of presentations is not seriously considered. This reality needs to be considered seriously when designing similar activities.

7.3.2.4 Settings

The settings for Internet-mediated intercultural language activities include not only ordinary classrooms with a teacher's computer, multimedia classrooms, and computer rooms (or self-access centres), but also informal settings such as a study lounge and places of residence where Internet access is available, as illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6. It can be seen from the classroom observations and case studies that while limited Internet-mediated activities take place in formal classroom settings, many more activities are conducted outside the class in the home, accommodation, study lounge, and library-based computer centre. Corbett (2003) points out that there is no privileged layout for these settings because different seating and computer allocation imply different activity designs. In classrooms where there is only a teacher's computer, activities are likely to be restricted to the demonstration of searching and the display of online information (e.g. GQ's practice in U11). When the number of student machines is adequate, group and individual activities such as online discussion, searching, reading, consulting, etc. can take place. In addition to the physical settings, online and virtual learning environments also play an important role in formulating intercultural learning activities. For instance, in Cases 2 and 4 teachers and students tended to display and use pre-edited online learning materials and resources in the class while leaving searching, referencing resources and conducting online interactions to time slots outside class. In Case 3, although Internet access was not available in the class, the class still made frequent use of online tools such as email, search engines and forums for consulting, discussing, searching and publishing.

7.3.2.5 Teachers' and students' roles

The roles of the teachers and students vary according to context and the activities being undertaken. Corbett (2003) suggests a gradual change from the instruction orientation to the independence orientation for conducting intercultural activities. O'Dowd (2006) also cautions that blindly marching the class into an unknown environment runs a huge risk. Students, although they are likely to be technically competent (as teachers often assume), may not be aware of or experienced in exploiting the educational potential of online tools. This is reflected in the survey questionnaire, in which they rated the lack of Internet-mediated learning experience as the most serious barrier. In addition, the assumption tends to over-generalise students' competence, ignoring the fact that there are many incompetent students who choose to participate minimally. Thus, it is safer and necessary for the teacher to take the active role as an instructor and guide to familiarise the class with various types of online activities within an intra-class community. It can be seen from Cases 3 and 4 that both the teachers prepared their students with guidance and instructions for participating in online activities. This 'nursery' is important because in China's educational context where Confucian heritage culture still has great influence (Jin and Cortazzi 1998, 2006), the teacher takes more responsibilities to make headway. Meanwhile, the teacher's initiatives provide the students with a sense of comfort and confidence by allowing them to develop their e-literacy (Gu 2006) before the class can reach out for intercultural exploration and exchange.

In activities where students are routinely assigned tasks such as presentation, they take the initiative in searching and selecting resources, synthesising materials, and editing presentations with Internet mediation. The teacher, then, becomes an organiser, a consultant (sometimes a spectator as the teacher may be technophobic), and an audience as

well as a commentator. The spectator role is typically evidenced by the observation of RR's class (Section 5.3.3.4).

In systematically designed activities such as setting up a class online forum for regular discussions outside the class, teachers realise that they become course guides, mediators and facilitators, as well as assessors of students' performance. Again, in both Case 3 and Case 4, the two teachers had a clear rationale for engaging students in online discussion (posting), preparing agendas for tasks, assigning groups, providing consultations, supervising and finally assessing students' contributions. Accordingly, students not only need to develop independent learning that involves searching and processing information but also have to work collaboratively with their peers to negotiate task sharing, co-construction of products and presentation of pair/group work. This process is demanding for both teachers and students because it takes more time than conventional teaching and learning interactions. Although in neither case did an ideal interactive discussion develop as expected, due to the pressure of assessment, it can be seen that such role shifts become tenable. In this regard, the extension of the classroom interactions through online communication becomes not only engaging, but also consuming – consuming in the sense of time commitment and, more importantly, consuming of the teacher's power, which used to be, and still is, highly respected in Confucian culture.

The teacher, in addition to their roles as an organiser and facilitator of activities, a manager of logistics and an evaluator of assessment, should be a good learner at the same time (Lewis 2006). This is because Internet technological development outpaces its educational realisation in many ways (Corbett 2010: 8). While the students are more easily updated with new technologies, the teacher must learn to cope with innovative applications and their educational potential. In a similar vein, tasks using students' presentation skills often

empower the students to be ‘masters’ of the particular process of operating information and knowledge, and in particular, of their own culture, that may (or may not) go beyond the teacher’s scope of knowledge. Teachers need to inter-weave their experiences with students’ cultures and, therefore, teaching becomes learning twice, or co-learning. In the meantime, teachers need to be willing to shift from being a knowledge authority to being a pedagogy authority and get ready for a new dynamic relationship that aims at contributing to promoting community autonomy.

In the next section, I will align the above discussions of the findings with the research questions.

7.4 *Relating the findings to research questions*

7.4.1 How are the ICC dimensions manifested in the language class?

It is clear that the national syllabuses have officially established the conceptual ICC goal but without fully-developed specific objectives (Zhang 2007; Song 2008). On the positive side, this gives space for individual institutions and teachers to explore and contribute to the details from multiple perspectives. On the negative side, without an authoritative framework, interpretations are divergent more than convergent, causing confusion and inconsistency, or even, at worst, resulting in total neglect of the goal.

An examination of documents collected from the fieldwork shows that language departments (schools and centres) conceive of ICC generically in three broad categories across English education sectors. In English major education syllabuses, ICC equates to ‘an all-round ability’ that mainly includes a solid foundation of all language skills and competent use of the target language with cultural awareness in various social and work

settings such as foreign trade and cultural exchange. In this regard, ICC is an overarching structure that tends to integrate language and culture in language programmes, and course materials are considered as ‘the basis of socio-cultural or life-related knowledge study’ (U2-DOC/Evaluation, my translation). In both English and non-English major education (including the Distance education strand), ICC is also seen as systematic knowledge about intercultural communication theories and the ability to apply theories for critical incident analysis. This is most evident in the courses titled *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication*, which are often set as an optional course for year-3 and above students. This assumes that those students will have sound language competence after two years’ intensive training. Therefore in this regard ICC does not focus on linguistic competence unlike the first category. In College English education, although ICC as a concept appears in the syllabus, it is interchangeably used with another concept, ‘integrative cultural literacy’. Noticeably, it is often located after the four basic language skills in document descriptions (see Section 5.3.3.2). This clearly reflects the perception of treating ICC, or rather, integrative cultural literacy as an added-on dimension in the CLT approach.

Textbook and online materials, especially *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication* course books, have started to address the ICC goal as a part of the College English education reform propelled by academics and publishers. The most evident elements related to ICC are the cultural notes and intercultural concepts, as well as supplementary audio-visual materials to texts. In some English major education courses (e.g. U2 and U6), there has been an emergence of the practice of adapting materials on Chinese culture written in English for the language class, although this remains marginal. Framed by the syllabuses and their subordinate course materials, teachers’ perceptions are largely identical to the above descriptions, from seeing ICC as an ultimate goal to seeing it as background knowledge. While the ‘ultimate goal’ of understanding the role of ICC may be vague

conceptually, it is widely shared as the cognitive aspect of ICC in addition to language proficiency. However, teachers who have explored intercultural communication tend to see the importance of an understanding of cultural perspectives, and explore methods of developing ICC relating to the affective, behavioural, and critical awareness domains. Students are considerably less clear about this ICC goal because it is not explained, except in the case of some *Cross-(Inter)cultural Communication* courses. A common immediate response is associated with knowledge about the target culture and society in English-speaking countries as well as a strong desire to communicate successfully with people from such places. This is understandable because in the formal sector of learning teachers' and students' immediate aims are examination-oriented, in which current language proficiency tests such as CET and TEM do not include an explicit ICC goal (Zhang 2007; Song 2008) and ICC assessment is a challenging issue (Byram 1997; Corbett 2003).

7.4.2 What Internet tools are used for language activities?

The investigation, mainly through interviews and observations, witnessed a wide use of Internet tools, in addition to the institutionally required use of both standalone multimedia CD-ROM materials and online learning platforms. Table 7.2 provides a list of the China-based tools in contrast to others.

Overall, both the teachers and the students used information and communication tools frequently in their daily life but less so for formal teaching and learning activities. Characteristically, in using online multimedia resources in the form of Web pages and databases, both teachers and students were inclined to visit professional websites provided by western media, typically such as the BBC and the VOA, while they showed little interest in searching Chinese media which also provided materials (mainly news and culture themes) in English. On the other hand, in using both information and

communication tools (as well as networking software), they chose to use a mix of Internet tools provided by the international and domestic markets, for various purposes. Domestic Internet tools, namely China-based tools, were especially popular among the students for searching resources in Chinese in order to understand original English materials such as novels (e.g. Case 4). These included the search engine, Baidu, as against its competitor Google China, and QQ chat as against MSN/Skype messenger, as well as the networking software Xiaonei, as against Facebook, to name but a few. Students did visit on-campus forums or social ones for sharing English learning materials and (examination) experiences. But there was no evidence of forum-based learning communities that have been established online by an English club, as in Gao's (2007, 2009) report on 'Blue Rain Café'.

| Internet Tools | China-based | Others |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Learning management system | Courseware-based online platform, JPKC websites, blogging | Blackboard (only U6), Moodle, Google Sites |
| Websites (for resources) | CCTV9.com, China Daily, China Radio International, Tudou.com and Youku.com (both for videos) etc. | BBC, VOA, CNN, Encyclopaedia Britannica, YouTube (mostly inaccessible) etc. |
| Websites (for language) | Various websites, represented by hjenglish.com (inclusive of language skills and tests) | Official websites for IELTS, TOEFL, etc. |
| Referencing tools | Various websites, represented by iciba.com (mainly translation) | Wikipedia (with irregular blocked access), Cambridge English Dictionary Online, Visual Thesaurus etc. |
| Synchronous communication | QQ, and Fetion (connect to mobile phones) messengers | MSN and Yahoo Messengers |
| Asynchronous communication | Various forum and blogging websites such as QQ Zone-blog, Fetion Zone-blog, etc. | Gmail, Windows Live Spaces |
| Networking | QQ Zone, Xiaonei, etc. | Facebook (rarely accessible) |

Table 7.2 Internet tools used by teachers and students in China's HEIs

7.4.3 How is the use of Internet tools shaped by the local context of education?

From the answer to the question in Section 7.4.2 it is clear that the use of Internet tools combines a socio-cultural impact, institutional culture and practical purpose. Bucher (2004) notices that despite Internet being seen as a global medium in terms of technological capability, in China most people tend to use it primarily as a domestic medium which is Chinese language dominant. This social tendency certainly has an influence on students' primary use of various domestic websites where they can find an abundance of language learning and testing materials provided by educational and/or education-related commercial agents, such as sample essays and mock examination materials. However, this trend does not seem to apply explicitly to foreign language classes when it comes to browsing websites for language and culture learning, largely because of the desire for using authentic materials from native-speaker resources. This is most salient when teachers and students source audio-visual materials from authoritative websites such as the BBC and the VOA, as exemplified in Business English class (Dragon's Den) in Case 2 and the British Literature class (Charles Dickens) in Case 4. By contrast, teachers and students reflect a negative attitude towards using English materials produced by Chinese online media, when used as language input. The reason, as discussed earlier, was the comparatively lower quality of the language used.

With regard to the use of communication and networking tools, in addition to the political reason that use of certain software products such as Google-affiliated Facebook and YouTube have been prohibited in China, there exists a cultural preference for certain domestic products because they are more attuned to Chinese consumers. This is evident from students' frequent references to using QQ much more than MSN Messenger simply because the former has more functions than the latter, one of which is connection with mobiles. This phenomenon can be explained by Thorne's (2003: 38) concept of 'cultures-

of-use', which suggests that the selection of online communication tools 'differs interculturally just as communicative genre, pragmatics and institutional context would be expected to differ interculturally'. However, this prevalence of using domestic Internet tools such as QQ inevitably limits access to people from different cultural backgrounds for online intercultural communication, unless the interlocutors install the relevant Chinese software.

Secondly, institutional culture plays a significant role in shaping Internet use (O'Dowd and Ritter 2006). Simply providing Internet access and software tools in a language classroom does not automatically lead to an educational or pedagogical advantage that brings perceived benefits for students and teachers (Martins et al. 2004). For example, in Case 1, compared with Cases 3 and 4, language classrooms had good Internet connections. However, the observed teachers did not seem positively disposed to the opportunities that the Internet brings to teaching and learning activities. This was partly due to their institutional practice that relied on using courseware in and outside of the class and partly because the College English classes did not require much more attention to be given to culture learning than to background knowledge. Although it is the only example that was studied in this research, it is reasonable to infer that many other similar institutions have the same practice, since they share the same national syllabus, as the documents from U1 revealed.

From Cases 2 and 3, it can be seen that the institutional policy and practice of Internet use, usually promoted by the academic head, or 'pedagogical managers' (ibid: 368), fostered teachers' and students' habits of Internet use. On the positive side, institutional support automates Internet use. For example, while in Case 2 the adequate provision of Internet access and institutional email accounts by the international partnership university

facilitated students' frequent use of the Internet for personal consultations with the tutors, group work and presentations, the students in Case 3, despite the lack of Internet access in class, were also proactive about conducting searching and researching activities, as well as signing up for Google accounts as requested by the Intercultural Institute. Another example can be seen in the School of English Studies in U6 where the teachers were encouraged to adopt the Blackboard learning management system for blended teaching. On the negative side, the common practice of requesting students to complete self-study tasks by using courseware largely becomes a de-motivating factor, as students feel that they are forced to do 'autonomous learning' without real control of their study, as discussed earlier.

Thirdly, the research data show that practical considerations often determine the use of Internet tools. This is particularly relevant to the students' choice of search engines for searching materials for practical purposes. For instance, in Case 4, as many students had difficulties (e.g. linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse) in comprehending British literature works as well as lacking time to read and digest selected texts, they preferred using the domestic search engine Baidu to Google China to search for Chinese translations of these texts. In Case 3 students turned to Google instead of Baidu for information about visual literacy because the topic is less discussed in China.

The discussions above, especially with reference to the four cases, confirm that Internet-mediated language-related classes for ICC development are heavily pedagogy-driven rather than technology-driven. The use of educational technology is essentially a matter of 'pedagogy, professional preparation, and curriculum' (van Lier 2005: 203). Using authentic materials from the textbook and the Internet was a premise of pedagogical activity design. In both survey and case studies, the teachers and the students all emphasised the importance of using authentic resources as learning materials. Although

print materials and CD-ROM-based materials still constitute the predominant language and culture input, more and more classes have made regular use of search engines and professional websites to find ‘good’ materials to supplement the textbooks.

7.4.4 Can Internet-mediated practices facilitate an intercultural approach to teaching and learning?

Throughout the survey and case studies, examples of using the Internet for language and culture teaching and learning were evidenced, both directly and indirectly. Many such Internet-mediated activities were loosely organised around the textbook, largely relying on seeking alternative sources of information and presentations of such information. These alternatives are believed to provide up-to-date and interesting materials for developing knowledge of cultural products, practices and perspectives. At its best, cross-cultural comparisons (learning) can be made by expanding the scope of information through Internet access (e.g. using English materials from Chinese online media for a comparison with the same topic from ‘authentic’ sources). Hence, students can gain cross-(inter)cultural knowledge in the form of awareness. However, whether this ‘awareness-raising pedagogy’ will put students in ‘a situation in which a critical experience is likely to occur’ (Block 2007: 117) remains questionable. Nonetheless, the Internet as a resource bank for cross-cultural teaching and learning can certainly make a contribution to language classes.

Apart from the average Internet-mediated cross-cultural teaching approach, there were instances of intercultural communication through the Internet between overseas teachers and local students, as represented by Cases 2 and 3, although other examples had existed prior to this research (e.g. U6 and U9’s collaboration with an American university for

debate training via videoconferencing, and U16's videoconferencing with an American counterpart). In these activities, intercultural communication takes place both in the face-to-face and online settings. When students are able to meet their teachers conveniently on campus, as happened with Case 2, they are inclined to have face-to-face intercultural contact, while using communication tools (mainly email) only for making appointments and for consultation. When there is no frequent physical contact, for example once a week in Case 3, students have to turn to the Internet (as well as mobiles) to maintain communication for consultation and discussion. In this regard, the availability of an overseas teacher, as a language and culture informant, provides a greater opportunity than the majority of language classes for students to experience intercultural communication both face-to-face and through electronic mediation. However there remains a question whether mere exposure to an intercultural encounter necessarily leads to intercultural awareness and understanding. This puzzle is relevant to the overseas teachers' (as well as local teachers') attitude to the local culture (and other cultures): in Case 2 use of Chinese domestic materials by teachers in the language class was reported to be rare, whereas in Case 3 the teacher purposely included films from different cultures in his teaching agenda.

Case 3 also demonstrates a certain level of interdiscourse approach, although less than ideally developed through online interaction. The request that students write reflective essays using their personal perspectives and experiences, coupled with a group of goals to carry out an 'online discussion' within the group, makes the students more aware of critical reflection on the films, as a way of constructing and expressing their own identities. This is also reflected in Case 4, despite its lack of intercultural communication inside and outside the literature class. With a level of cross-cultural learning made possible through accessing some 'authentic' audio-visual materials on British history, society, literature and people, the students were asked to carry out extended online discussions on the topics extracted

from the literary works (although this was difficult to implement). There was evidence that students contributed to the discussion threads according to their own feelings and opinions. This process involved an affective domain development of ICC to a large degree. However, in both cases, without a sense of communicating with a genuine audience (as the posts were oriented by the teachers towards assessment), neither online forum evidenced the progress from self-expression (or monologues) to relating, comparing, negotiating and co-constructing meanings, the elements usually displayed in CMC activities. The lack of online moderation by teachers might have been another reason for this.

To sum up, while it is possible that Internet-mediated teaching and learning activities lead to intercultural learning and communication, Internet-mediated language activities may not be effective without a foundation of Intercultural Communication theory, methodology, principles and practice.

7.5 Towards a framework for Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language teaching and learning

7.5.1 The emerging framework

In the above sections I have discussed the findings from the fieldwork and examined the Internet-mediated practices in diverse educational contexts, and their contributions to the formation of an intercultural approach. Despite the many existing constraints, I have become optimistic that Internet-mediated practices can lead to an intercultural approach to teaching and learning in Chinese contexts, provided that the pedagogical implications of Internet use are well established and understood. I put forward the premise of pedagogical set-up before the conclusion because I realise that quite a few teachers use the Internet purely by following their intuition and may still lack a good sense of the overall picture of

Internet-mediated intercultural approaches. After all, experiences in Internet-mediated teaching and learning do not necessarily guarantee the fostering of an intercultural approach. In other words, it is important to highlight what the dimensions of an intercultural approach are, and why and how the Internet should be integrated into such an approach.

In Chapter 2, a range of Internet-mediated intercultural language activities was identified (Belz and Thorne 2006; O'Dowd 2006, 2007a, b) on the basis of reported practices, all of which draw heavily on cross-site collaboration and project-oriented learning, in the forms of telecollaboration, e-tandem learning, local informant-learner partnership and participation in established e-communities. The literature also evidenced the emergence of similar endeavours in China almost a decade ago (e.g. Gu 2006). However, in this research into China's HEIs, a distinctive feature has been identified. That is, in most of the cases, there is rarely any cross-site collaboration or project-based learning, except for Case 3's intercultural wiki pilot. Teachers and students are mostly involved in intra-class (intercultural) language activities with (limited) Internet mediation. These activities are characteristically resource-based and self-expression-oriented, in contrast to collaboration-based models. I therefore suggest that an alternative model to telecollaboration-based projects should be taken into account. Based on the fieldwork research and evidence-based discussion of research data alongside existing literature, I propose a tentative, exploratory framework concerning Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning that combines the Chinese contexts with others (Figure 7.1).

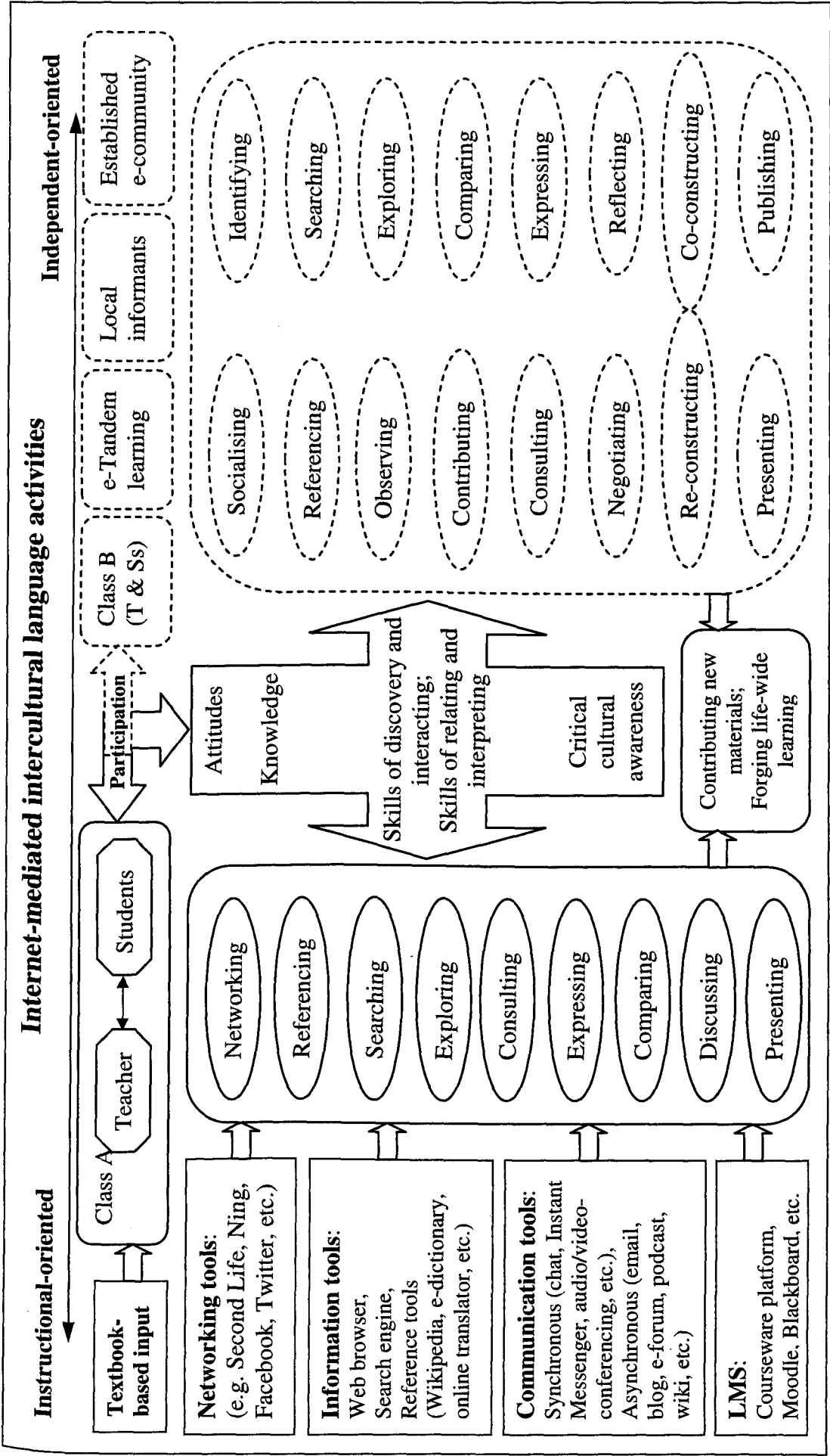


Figure 7.1 The conceptual framework for process-oriented Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning

This framework is a highly conceptualised result drawing on the investigated institutional contexts, in combination with imagined institutional contexts and practices that are summarised from evidence-based reports. It has a strong focus on process-oriented Internet-mediated intercultural language activities. The discussions of the findings and the proposed framework are centred upon Internet-mediation for facilitating an intercultural approach to teaching and learning languages, not only for its immediate application for professional Internet-mediated intercultural language activities, but also as a proposal for considering issues of investigation and investment in classes, curricula, and collaboration.

The left side of the framework represents the actual elements (using continuous frame lines) that are embodied in this research, in contrast to the ones in the right side which shows potential for further development (framed by broken lines), although these elements do exist in the literature (Section 2.4.3.2). Taken together, this conceptual framework entails three interwoven dimensions of Internet-mediated intercultural language activities, i.e. human participants, pedagogy and pedagogical tools, with an orientation to skills and practices in the process. The dynamics of these dimensions are explained below:

- First of all, with an Internet-mediated environment, the language class (Class A) has opportunities not only to access enriched information but also to realise empowered communication (Warschauer, Shetzer and Meloni 2000; Debski 2006; Gu 2006).

Essentially containing a teacher and his/her students at the core (of course administrators and technicians are also involved), Class A is enabled to build up the type of Internet-mediated intra-class community, which allows the teacher and the students to extend their

face-to-face communication to virtual contact, especially outside the class. This is of practical importance if the conventional classroom interactions are constrained by limited time, as examples in Chapters 5 and 6 have shown. At the same time, restricted face-to-face communication (or consultation) after class in some institutions, caused by commuting problems, may be offset by running online interaction. Such intra-class online community building is also conducive to fostering the 'Greater Classroom' notion proposed by U2, which wishes to streamline classroom instructions with 'co-curricular activities' (Liu 2007c). This intra-class community can be, and should be, both seen as the starting point of organising online non-interactive activities (e.g. cross-cultural comparison and intercultural exploration) and interactive activities (interdiscourse communication), and become a cornerstone for activities that involve intercultural communication when conditions allow. Without the ability to communicate with peers from the same 'culture', how can the students be expected to communicate well with people from different cultural backgrounds?

When it is well-established and conditions permit (indicated by the broken-line arrow top centre in Figure 7.1), this Class A online community may reach out to other communities or individuals by means of *inter-class telecollaboration*, *inter-group student-student tandem learning*, *local informant-learner partnership*, and *mass participation in established e-communities*, as suggested by Belz and Thorne (2006). Whatever the form of participation, be it collective or individual, this expansion moves from an instructional orientation towards an independent learning orientation. Such a spectrum of expansion

allows Class A to go beyond its own scope and broaden its horizon of teaching and learning through Intercultural Communication.

- Secondly, distinct to a technology-driven approach, in Class A's pedagogical preparation it is vital to integrate elements of Byram's (1997) Intercultural (Communicative) Competence model into language curricula and implement these elemental objectives (as the central arrow-column in Figure 7.1) with explicit strategies. Although Byram's model is originally for FLE in physical settings, it is still conceptually applicable to online settings (Belz and Thorne 2006; O'Dowd 2006, 2007a). In this framework, coupled with the elements of knowledge (especially knowledge of social interaction), attitudes and critical cultural awareness, the two sets of skills, i.e. skills of discovery and interacting and skills of relating and interpreting, are particularly important (as the two broad arrows in the arrow-column represent in Figure 7.1) because it is through online interaction that Intercultural Communication (Piller 2007) can be realised. With Internet mediation, the two sets of skills correspond with and contribute to a range of teaching and learning practices (in ovals) that are summarised from evidence shown in this study (the left column), as well as from the existing literature (the right column). These practices in the framework are open-ended.

Compared with the two columns of practices, it is evident that although both groups share many actions, the intra-class community (Class A) has considerably fewer practices than when it is working with the various cross-site communities which can undertake collaborative projects. Nevertheless, these skills-based practices are oriented towards

intercultural exploration, exchange and reflection. What needs clarifying here is that although many actions on both columns share the same labels, they do not necessarily produce identical meanings. For example, ‘exploring’ on the left often refers to students studying online materials supplied or recommended by their teachers, while on the right it usually occurs between cross-site students/informants. The same applies to the action of ‘consulting’, which on the left it means the action between students and the teacher, while on the right it is often among student partners.

- Thirdly, for Class A, the instruction tools essentially include textbook-based materials and a menu of Internet technologies currently in use for language and intercultural learning. Unlike some Web-based projects (e.g. Furstenberg et al. 2001) or e-community collaboration (e.g. Cassell and Tversky 2005) which do not involve textbook use, textbook and print materials play a predominant role in educational contexts like China’s (Jin and Cortazzi 2006; Wang and Coleman 2009). Therefore, an integration of Internet resources into the textbook-based materials seems not only important but also meaningful. Internet technologies include technologies for information-seeking, for communication, for networking as communities, and for particular educational use such as learning management. In one way or another, the use of these tools and the combination of these uses all facilitate the development of a range of language practices (as represented by the hollow arrows in Figure 7.1). It is these Internet technologies that enliven the often rigid textbook materials and instructional activities.

Although most of the Internet technologies are readily available and accessible in the language class and elsewhere, it is not so much the Internet tools but the kinds of tasks and activities that teachers and students carry out with Internet mediation that can make a difference (Moore et al. 1998). The tools' educational value will only be realised with a good pedagogical rationale and a well-defined plan in line with the ICC model and the ultimate goal of cultivating intercultural speakers. The short-term objectives and the immediate outcomes of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning are, ideally, to contribute new learning materials and to support life-long learning and wider participation in learning through online community building, interaction and collaboration.

7.5.2 Principles

Since each class, goal and context is unique, it is not practical to prescribe concrete strategies that apply to all settings. However, it is possible to set out some general principles to foster the regular use of Internet tools that are underlined by an intercultural approach, in order to make teaching and learning activities more systematic and sustainable.

- ***Principle 1: The underpinning of the Intercultural Communication theoretical framework.***

Teachers, as well as students, must be made aware explicitly that a simplistic view of seeking intercultural communication with 'native speakers' from the target culture is to misunderstand the nature of foreign language education. In the context where English is

taught and used as an international language, a pursuit of pure intercultural communication with 'native speakers' proves too restrictive. While in all foreign language education situations it is ideally expected to establish intercultural communication opportunities with the target cultural groups, teachers and students must learn to see beyond the prescribed 'intercultural communication' frame and appreciate different opportunities of communication from a discourse approach (Scollon and Scollon 2001a, b; Piller 2007).

For example, in the intra-class community, it can be a mono-cultural society (e.g. Cases 1 and 4) or a multicultural one like the scenario of international teacher with local students (e.g. Cases 2 and 3). The partner class can be from the same national culture (as some early email projects suggested), the target culture, and other cultures as well. Although in e-tandem learning and local informant-learner partnerships, interlocutors are preferably from the target culture, e-community members are inevitably multicultural, providing rich multiple resources and perspectives. It is through this Intercultural Communication framework, empowered with a non-essentialist perspective, that teachers and students are able to renew their motivation. Whatever the situation, the relationship and interaction (or simply, interdiscourse communication) between the teacher and the students in the language class is the most vital element. Hence, with regard to the Chinese context under discussion here, it would be crucial to conceptualise intercultural communication as a multi-dimension concept which entails interaction not only with individuals from a distinctive collective culture but also those of identical nationality.

- ***Principle 2: The continuum of formal learning and flexible learning.***

This framework corresponds to the vision of learning from a conventional classroom event to a continuum of life-long (and ‘life-wide’) learning contexts that constitute formal and flexible learning. While the former largely involves fixed (even rigid) language curricula that do not seem yet to fully encompass an intercultural approach to FLE (at least in China), it is through the Internet that language programmes can be made more flexible in terms of conducting intercultural exploration, experiencing intercultural communication, and socialising with global and local people. This widened learning contact emphasises learning by doing, or experiential learning. Kohonen et al. (2001) advocate that classrooms are not just the venue preparing for the life to come but rather a community in their own right, with a specific culture. Thus, teachers and students should take the local community as the foundation for structuring their practice and constructing learning experiences, with Internet mediation. Students’ experiences can be enriched, and social autonomy (Holliday 2003) is exercised, when an adequate learning environment is provided and guidance is structured by the teacher (Kohonen et al. 2001: 21), for example in accessing authentic intercultural materials. When conditions allow, students’ experiences can be further enhanced, under the teacher’s careful guidance, through intercultural authentic communication with a partner class, keypals, local expert informants, and professional members of online communities.

- ***Principle 3: Using textbook materials in alliance with Internet resources.*** This framework, although it highlights the importance of Internet mediation, does not underplay the use of textbook materials or other media resources. On the contrary, it

proposes integrating all the resources, including human resources. This is not a mere nod to the current social-educational context where textbooks are a key instructional tool for a language class, but also an effort to upgrade the tradition without demolishing it. Unlike some Web-based projects that are independent of a course syllabus (e.g. the *Cultura* projects of Furstenberg et al. 2001), many language classes are constrained by language curricula so that an independent project is often problematic in terms of assessment (Xu and Warschauer 2004; Gu 2006; Wang 2010). Therefore, instead of persisting in a revolutionary change which is difficult to achieve, a more realistic attitude should be adopted, in recognition of the constraints. While textbook materials are often considered out-of-date and may be inadequate in terms of intercultural authenticity (Feng and Byram 2002), the content can be deliberately employed as a trigger for more creative uses such as reconstruction into a more up-to-date and interculturally authentic version, with the assistance of Internet-mediated exploration and communication. Liaw's (2006) example of adopting reading texts on local cultural phenomena, written by overseas visitors, for her class to discuss with a foreign partner class proved informative and insightful.

All in all, since the precise factors that impact Internet-mediated language activities will vary from one context to another, special attention should be paid to the compatibility and transferability of such elements translated from one framework to another particular context.

7.6 Summary

Based on the findings from the survey and case studies, this chapter has discussed a range of issues that are seen as salient to understanding the current situation of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning in China's HEIs. With the survey's broad frame and the case studies' in-depth descriptions, it was seen that findings were largely consistent with and complementary to each other.

These findings have contributed to a pedagogical paradigm that looks considerably different to the existing one discussed in the literature. This resulted in a proposal to re-examine the framework for Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning. Interpretations have been made and some principles of implementation presented, in the hope of sharing with those who are interested in getting into this field, or who want to enhance current practices, a fresh vision and idea of its theoretical and pedagogical underpinnings.

Chapter 8 Implications and Conclusions

8.1 *Review of the research*

At the beginning of this thesis I presented the rationale for doing this research, which was both a personal and professional commitment (Chapter 1). There followed a comprehensive review of the literature, covering the areas of foreign language teaching and learning, culture and intercultural communication, and Internet-mediated language teaching and learning both globally and in China (Chapter 2). After identifying a research gap, namely that Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language teaching and learning is an emerging yet little explored topic in China, I proposed and justified a multi-stage and multi-site research design framework for investigation, which combined a survey and case studies (Chapter 3). Having done so, I reported my fieldwork, which was conducted in a total of 24 institutions from September 2008 to June 2009, with the challenges and strategies reflexively highlighted (Chapter 4).

Following that, I presented the very recent complex and diverse mosaic of Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language teaching and learning activities in Chinese tertiary institutions (Chapters 5 and 6). The focus of my investigation was on the examination of current practices and perceptions of ICC-oriented English language education with the mediation of Internet technologies, and an evaluation of whether such engagements facilitated developing an Internet-mediated intercultural approach to language teaching and learning. I looked into four factors, i.e. institutional contexts, teachers and students, pedagogies, and technological infrastructures, in order to understand the dynamics of Internet-mediated language class interactions. In the survey

I investigated a wide range of institutional types: ordinary universities, language universities, college-level institutes, international partnership universities, distance education institutes. This helped me to adopt a socially realistic (Debski 2000) perspective in undertaking the investigation and, consequently, in selecting four cases for in-depth study. While cases varied in nature, I demonstrated their complexities and diversities at both macro and micro levels in a consistent format, and conducted cross-case comparisons.

The findings I obtained revealed a certain level of commonalities, despite the uniqueness of each case, in applying Internet technologies to intercultural language activities in China's tertiary English language classes. The Internet-mediated practices were considerably different to the approaches identified in other literatures (Chapter 7). I synthesised these findings and mapped them out in the form of a comprehensive framework for process-oriented Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning. I also developed principles for understanding and applying it to practice.

In the following sections of this chapter, I summarise my research by outlining its implications for professional and pedagogical concerns, highlighting its contributions from the theoretical, methodological and ethical perspectives, stating its limitations, and making suggestions for future study.

8.2 Implications

The main goal of this research was to generate a body of empirical data to help understand the current practices and perceptions of Internet-mediated teaching and learning for language and culture purposes at Chinese tertiary institutions. The findings have implications for academic administrators, language educationalists and practitioners both at home and abroad.

8.2.1 Developing an intercultural education ideology and practice

The findings from the study reveal that although the notion of ICC has been for some time a declared goal of English language education in China, it remains a hidden aspect of the curriculum in foreign language programmes (Lu 2002; Zhang 2007; Song 2008, 2009).

Providing a dedicated course on cross-(inter)cultural communication and raising awareness of ICC, as evidenced in Chapter 5, does not necessarily promote ICC development as this essentially requires experiential learning and real interactions (Kohonen et al. 2001; Block 2007; Zhang 2007; Walker and Brocke 2009). In addition, the findings from Cases 3 and 4 in Chapter 6 indicate that Internet-mediated intercultural teaching and learning exist only as an enthusiasm at a personal level, far removed from institutional efforts. These findings suggest that it is necessary to re-orient ELT in the institutional context of intercultural education and to view English language teaching and learning both for and as intercultural communication (Song 2008: 110). Such a paradigm shift requires a dual ideological innovation, i.e. institutional internationalisation and localisation of English language teaching and learning.

Globally, the importance of English as an international language (EIL) has been acknowledged (Holliday 2005; McKay and Bokhorst-Heng 2008). Using the EIL model, English language institutions and departments can participate in the process of international communication and reconstruct their educational ideologies and practices, especially with Internet facilitation. Developing international collaboration seems a viable way towards internationalisation. The *eChina-UK* Programme (Banks, Lally, Liu and McConnell 2006; Spencer-Oatey and Tang 2006; Spencer-Oatey 2007) is a good case in point. Both nationally funded, a group of UK universities and their Chinese counterparts collaborated in several sub-projects to develop e-learning course materials for Chinese master-level students. While the primary purpose and product was joint course materials production, they became aware of the value of developing an intercultural approach to undertaking cross-site collaboration, despite challenging processes of collaboration owing to their different expectations and cultural perceptions.

Collaborations can also take place at a local level, according to Liu (2007b), in the forms of joint reflection in teaching journals, joint construction of learning materials and shared teaching experiences, and joint team-teaching projects between staff from different cultural backgrounds and professional levels. Referring to his directorship at the English Language Centre at Shantou University, Liu (*ibid.*) showed how a teaching community was built between the native English speaker teachers and local staff so as to optimise the teaching and learning environment. This example is similar to the Case 2 scenario where team-teaching between international and Chinese staff is the norm. Tajino and Tajino (2000: 3) also support this kind of collaboration and suggest, from their experience in Japan, that ‘team-teaching’ be better understood as ‘team-learning’, in which all the participants, teachers as well as students, are encouraged to learn from

one another by exchanging ideas or cultural values. Liu (2007b: 114) suggests that despite the challenges of intercultural collaboration, the process of working together between staff of different cultural backgrounds is one way of enhancing language teachers' intercultural ideologies and competence. Whichever form of collaboration is adopted, Liu (*ibid.*: 120) sees it as community building.

While the above examples provide an alternative way towards localising intercultural education, which is less common than in the mainstream English language teaching and learning scenarios, an intercultural education ideology and practice can equally develop in conventional institutions. First of all, the introduction of the intercultural dimension to language curricula can and should play a role in triggering reformulation of educational policies from a theoretical perspective. An intercultural approach implies a holistic view of teaching and learning English language for and as intercultural communication, which rejects the 'language + culture' mode (Song 2008). Therefore, a simple breakdown of language syllabuses into specific skills and cultural components will not lead to an integrated intercultural approach.

Secondly, within an intercultural approach, language programmes should be consistently realigned with the ICC components and objects. Dłaska (2000: 248) introduces the UK-based 'institution-wide language programmes' as an approach that goes beyond raising a vague sense of cultural awareness, making culture learning explicitly 'the underlying, and overriding, principle of general language modules'. This experience may be meaningful to both English Major education and College English education strands in terms of re-structuring language programmes with a view to promote ICC and learner autonomy. Re-structuring language

programmes also means re-allocation of resources, including overseas teachers who can be expected to make a greater contribution to learners' experiential learning and co-curricular activities than merely offering spoken English classes. With a wider vision, Lu (2002) proposes a more project-oriented approach, through establishing comprehensive projects across disciplines, including learning-oriented activities (intercultural knowledge and skills), development-oriented activities (critical cultural awareness) and reinforcement-oriented activities (attitudes, values, and reflexivity). Such reformulations of curricular structure often challenge the existing language educational policy and practice, and require significant top-down effort and commitment. An alternative may be to start from developing online knowledge-building communities by integrating resources, expertise and practices.

8.2.2 Teachers' professional development

In China national guidelines have set goals for learner development, including ICC and e-literacy, which are not only a requirement for students, but also impose as a prerequisite that teachers have adequate knowledge of how to integrate Internet technologies with pedagogical designs for intercultural teaching and learning. However, how to ensure that teachers develop such a professional identity remains unspecified. It emerges from this study that two broad dimensions are vital for teachers' professional development at the tertiary level, i.e. teachers' intercultural competence and e-literacy. The first one relies on 'interculturalisation of English education' (Song 2008: iv), and the second on CALL education (Gu 2006; Hubbard and Levy 2006; Levy and Stockwell 2006) taking into consideration the availability of technological infrastructures. These two dimensions are reflected in the framework for Internet-mediated intercultural

language teaching and learning from a pedagogical perspective (see Figure 7.1). Hence, the framework is also applicable to teachers' professional development because teachers are also learners in the process of teaching, as discussed in Chapter 7.

Implementing intercultural FLE is a ubiquitous challenge, even in European Union countries where intercultural education has been a consistent focus (Sercu 2006). It is even harder in places like China where more empirical research on intercultural communication for FLE needs to be conducted (Song 2008: 115). In the light of inadequate pedagogical resources, enhancing teacher education and training in such specialist domains as intercultural foreign language education and e-literacy seems all the more important and urgent, as existing foreign language teacher education programmes do not address such issues sufficiently (Gu, personal communication, 16/03/2009). A very recent achievement in setting up English curriculum standards and teacher performance standards is a series of volumes for pre-tertiary English language teachers in China (see Agor and Chen 2007; Murphey and Chen 2007). In the teacher performance standards (Murphey and Chen *ibid.*) the cultural dimension is referred to as 'exploring and applying culture', and whereas the technological dimension is not explicit, it can be implicitly related to 'expanding professional horizons'. At the tertiary level, while such standards are not yet seen, there has been a continuous effort by the China Association for Intercultural Communication (and its sub-groups) to organise annual short-term research seminars and training workshops for language teachers. However, the current scale of professional communication is neither systematic nor adequate as regards teacher education (Song 2008: 116).

Equally challenging is the use of computer and Internet technologies, which should also be a serious concern in language teaching and learning. Hubbard and Levy (2006) point out that the successful use of technology relies on pedagogically and technologically proficient language teachers. Enthusiasts' self-training needs to be complemented by systematic training in new technologies at national and local levels or via new technologies themselves, preferably using online communities of practice and collaborative action research. Through participating in communities of practice, teachers are able to share resources and practices, co-build knowledge, and seek support from each other, either within an institution or across sites with Internet mediation. Through collaboration, especially with external (national and international) support (e.g. Banks et al. 2006; Spencer-Oatey and Tang 2006; Spencer-Oatey 2007), practitioners can learn and research by using Internet technologies in a directly experiential way, by solving problems *in situ*. In this way, both expert-novice interaction and peer-collaboration can be maintained and developed. While assuming that teachers can search the Internet themselves for useful knowledge and training websites (e.g. Chen and Fan 2004; Xu 2004), I list some useful resources, as requested by informant teachers during my fieldwork, in Appendix F.

8.3 Contributions to theory, methodology and practice

8.3.1 Theory

As discussed in Chapter 2, in recent years, developing language learners' ICC through Internet mediation for intercultural exploration and communication as a new domain across the fields of both CALL and intercultural communication for FLE has attracted increasing attention from foreign language specialists, educators and practitioners worldwide (Byram et al. 2001;

Furstenberg et al. 2001; Corbett 2003; Belz and Thorne 2006; O'Dowd 2006). Empirical studies including a great variety of Internet-mediated intercultural teaching and learning practices have provided a wealth of theoretical and pedagogical contributions to the development of foreign language education in the information age. A range of Internet-mediated intercultural language activities have been developed, predominantly in the forms of cross-site collaborative projects, most of which are undertaken between native speakers and non-native speakers (Wang 2009). While these practices and their underpinning theoretical frameworks are summarised under the umbrella term Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education (Belz and Thorne 2006; Thorne 2006), it seems that other forms of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning, such as practices within single classes (multilingual and monolingual), are sometimes overlooked within this international community of interest.

This research goes beyond the scope of existing theoretical contributions and complements the field with a perspective from China that does not necessarily deal with collaborative efforts with an outside partner (the intercultural wiki attempt was suspended). Internet-mediated pedagogical practices developed for the purpose of teaching and learning language and culture in these cases were characteristically single-class based. It was observed that the variety of individual cases depended on a number of factors – institutional policies and priorities, individual teacher skills, experience and motivation, technological set-up, student finance, attitudes and motivation, constraints of syllabus and exams etc. Through the description, analysis and interpretation of multiple sets of data from the survey and through four in-depth case studies, this thesis generates a variety of inter-related themes that enriches the framework of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning, and indicates that pedagogical and individual factors (such as

teachers' proficiency and learners' willingness to cooperate) play the most influential roles in shaping Internet-mediated practices for intercultural language activities. For example, in Cases 3 and 4, despite their less favourable institutional and technological conditions than those of Cases 1 and 2 individual teachers committed themselves to devising an online forum site for extended discussion and reflection.

At the practical level, it is hoped that readers will better understand 'the complexities and particularities' (Liu 2007a: 7) of applying Internet technologies to foster ICC development in China, where an integral perspective on aligning ICC development and Internet technologies is underexplored. It provides academic researchers with food for thought and educational practitioners with unusual opportunities to compare their own teaching practices with the ones demonstrated and to construct new ideas and practices in their particular contexts.

Theoretically, the promotion of the notion of *Internet-mediated intra-class community* contributes to a fuller understanding of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning. In Chapter 7 I have argued, based on my fieldwork data, that cross-site collaboration is not the only way of promoting learners' ICC development through the Internet. Rather, an Internet-mediated intra-class community can be considered the basis and starting point for undertaking Internet-mediated intercultural language activities. This Internet-mediated learning community, whether monocultural or multicultural, can be set up as an alternative to formal class interaction in Internet-mediated teaching and learning so as to integrate online resources into language programmes, to build a sense of group membership and cohesion, to develop knowledge-building communities (Hoadley and Kilner 2005; Hodgkinson-Williams et al. 2005)

and to foster understanding and critical thinking through interdiscourse and intercultural communication (Scollon and Scollon 2001a, b; Piller 2007). It is fundamentally different to those courseware-based 'e-class' or e-learning approaches which require only human-machine interaction for content learning. It is also different to those well established e-communities (Thorne 2006) which are external to the class with or without a definite educational orientation and purpose. It does not even have to rely on telecollaboration with eGroups (Walker and vom Brocke 2009) for intercultural communication with 'native speakers'. Such a theoretical construct of the intercultural learning community needs to be further scrutinised and validated through more empirical studies. However, the cultivation of this core community should not be neglected in a language class where new technologies are available.

8.3.2 Multisite and multistage fieldwork methodology

In Chapter 3, I argued that multisite and multistage fieldwork was necessary for conducting this research, not only because of practical concerns, but also because of methodological considerations. Owing to China's vast geographical territory and diverse institutional contexts, neither a survey nor a single case study approach seems to suffice for an investigation that is adequate in breadth and depth. However, few prior studies have carried out extensive and systematic observations of Internet-mediated language class interactions owing to various practical constraints such as limited budgets and the lack of accessibility. In my research, an integration of the survey and case study approaches strengthened the possibility of combining the extensive with the intensive. Such an endeavour, although relatively expensive (Herriott and Firestone 1983), proved advantageous from a methodological point of view. The preliminary

survey helped collect data sets and select samples from a broad range of institutions. The subsequent multiple case studies combined in-depth description with the ability to generalise. Therefore, within a shared data collection and analysis framework, adopting a multisite case study approach allowed me to generate ‘in-depth description’ about the ‘unique aspects of each site’ and the ‘contexts that make special contributions to the phenomena of interest’ (ibid: 16). In this research, I also acted as the single investigator who conducted all the fieldwork in all sites so that the data collection ‘instrument’ was standardised, ‘across sites without sacrificing the potential for in-depth description’ (ibid: 18).

8.3.3 Multi-site fieldwork as institutional catalyst for innovative practice

One of the rewards of my research fieldwork, albeit implicit, was that my visits became a catalyst for some institutions/individuals who were prepared to implement an Internet-mediated approach, and for some others who were willing but not ready yet to do so. My research has helped to raise Chinese teachers’ and students’ awareness and to inform them about the possibilities for developing ICC via Internet technologies. Now I have seen some changes and growth. While writing up this thesis, I was informed of the latest efforts by my fieldwork informants in two universities regarding their application of Internet-mediated technologies for telecollaborative language and culture teaching and learning. For instance, the Intercultural Institute in U14 has started using Skype to establish intercultural dialogues between Chinese English majors and German language students at a master-course level since September 2009. This is an example of positive progress and I am confident that, given time, there will be more impact within the institutions I visited.

In addition, during my fieldwork quite a few informant teachers expressed to me their interest in establishing a collaborative agenda both for teaching and conducting action research, either with a partner or with me as an advisor. All these emerging endeavours have validated my effort to design and conduct this research as a personal interest and social commitment (Chapter 1). While it is not my ultimate intention to prescribe a list of Internet-mediated intercultural activities, I believe that some recommendations for new practices that fit in with the context in China would be useful as a means of presenting my thoughts in the hope that they can trigger inspirations. With reference to my proposed framework (Section 7.5; see also Müller-Hartmann 2006, 2007; Corbett 2010), I would make some suggestions for practical use, as below.

For intra-class community development, one should consider:

- **Institutional preparation.** Teachers should have a prior communication with the administrators in terms of meeting the curricular requirements, developing pedagogical design and seeking institutional support for facility access.
- **Technical preparation.** Teachers can start by setting up an online community within their class(es). It is worth trying institution-based servers or free commercial ones for creating learning community platforms which should include publishing, communicating, archiving, editing and searching functions (e.g. Google Site in Case 3 and Moodle in Case 4). Also it is worth surveying students' habitual use of online tools to identify possibilities of alternative pedagogical design.
- **Managerial preparation.** Teachers can enhance students' motivation by creating individual profiles for online networking, netiquette establishment (Case 3) and content/task upload. Teachers should state specific goals, requirements and assessment

criteria clearly in advance and allow negotiation with students and flexibility for improvement.

- **Pedagogical preparation.** Teachers should disseminate, monitor and maintain online interaction with students by various means such as grouping, supervising students and showcasing their learning activities with multi-perspectives. Students are encouraged to provide interculturally-represented learning resources to co-build a resource bank.

Based on the intra-class community building, one can further seek collaboration with external partners, from colleagues in the same institution to a cross-site partner class. In addition to the above intra-class issues, some other aspects are worth considering:

- **Networking preparation.** This can be done on-site such as between colleagues in the same institution or online within professional communities through mailing lists and forums to seek partnership. Teachers need to network with and identify potential partners to negotiate a possible collaboration with regard to pedagogical goals, methods, measures, resources, facilities, etc.
- **Co-ordinating preparation.** It is important for teachers on each side to negotiate a workable schedule for communication and collaborative work, especially when in a telecollaborative mode. Task design and allocation to each side need to be balanced and mutually beneficial.

This said, one of the major insights arising from the fieldwork undertaken from the current research has been the importance of institution and policy support. Without it, it will be difficult for teachers to engage with many of the principles of good practices suggested above.

8.4 Limitations and suggestions for future study

8.4.1 Limitations

Having acknowledged the positive outcomes discussed in the above section, I am also aware of the limitations of this research. Having reported problems regarding fieldwork data collection and analysis, in this section I draw attention to the research methodology and findings.

My fieldwork lasted over a period of seven months, covering a survey and follow-up case studies. Methodologically, the selection of the cases was informed by the survey of a total of 24 institutions across China. The constraints of time and frequent travel and visits made it difficult to collect systematic data from each site consistently. Alternative choices made by the 24 institutions in terms of which textbook they used make it impossible for me to observe some more recent efforts in promoting online interactive intercultural materials that some textbook publishers produced (e.g. NSCE). It would have been an important part of the current landscape in China's tertiary English education for research. The diverse nature of the institutions and the negotiations necessary to gain access meant that it was problematic to follow a common set of steps for data collection. As already stated in Chapter 3, the goal of this research was to generate empirical evidence that could contribute to a better understanding of the use of Internet technologies for intercultural language activities and not to seek to claim wider generalisation. While each case was reported with regard to its issue-specific context, the process of cross-site comparison and generalisation may have reduced the site-specific features (Herriott and Firestone 1983: 17).

The findings, from both the survey and case studies, may only be applicable to the group of samples I approached. Although increasing the number of cases might facilitate generalisation, it is likely to limit 'the resources that are available for describing and analyzing events at any one site or for cross-site comparison' (Herriott and Firestone *ibid.*). Therefore, given the limits on both budget and time, I had to strike a balance between quantity and quality. However, it is possible to draw certain generalisations from my study, as discussed in Chapter 7. The findings were also limited, to some extent, by the difficulty in collecting complete and consistent data, because of the inherent nature of voluntary participation in qualitative studies, local differences in negotiating access, and the gender imbalance among participants, as revealed in Chapter 4. In analysing data, I concentrated on the research focus while taking little notice of other issues. In addition, I did not attempt to quantify data, in order to avoid undermining 'the descriptive value of qualitative research that the multisite design is intended to exploit' (Herriott and Firestone *ibid.*). While it might seem subjective, it was a type of empirical research and the results were based on data collected in the field. Thus, as long as the findings are transferable to similar institutional contexts (Lamy 2005), it still merits this research.

8.4.2 Suggestions for future research

In this thesis what I have done is to identify, but not study in detail, a number of factors which impact on whether, how and to what extent particular institutions, and individuals within those institutions, understand 1) ICC as an educational goal, and 2) applications of Internet technology, and how they implement (and integrate) them. I suggest that for future research the following variables, inclusive but not conclusive, need to be considered in greater depth.

- At an individual level (student age, gender, motivation, interest, student time and cost, teacher experience, attitude and focus, etc.), the characteristics of teachers and students are always interesting focuses for research. While I looked at the dynamics of teacher-student interaction in my research, some other factors, such as students' age and gender, were not fully explored, and would be worth examining in future research.
- At a pedagogical level (learning material development, task/project design, evaluation and assessment), how to integrate materials, tasks, Internet tools and assessment in pedagogical design, both within and outside the class, is an important question that should be addressed. The recent joint efforts and the actual effect of promoting interactive intercultural materials by domestic and international publishers are becoming an important aspect for future research.
- At an institutional level (type of institution, geographical location, syllabus and examination constraints, technological support, etc.), institutional characteristics and educational contexts are a complex theme that directly influences the implementation of the ICC goal and e-literacy.
- At a national level (policy, guidance, teacher development, etc.), it would be helpful to conduct research into teacher development standards in order to promote the educational goals of ICC and e-literacy.

As a developmental continuation of this research agenda, one possible way forward is to encourage - and engage in - action research by and with colleagues who have been involved in internet-mediated intercultural learning and who are willing to apply innovative ideas and practices. Another suggestion for future research is to design experimental studies to test new

ideas and approaches with volunteer classes. In such studies it is important to consider local contexts carefully and to be flexible in the face of uncertainties and unpredictability. In whatever situation, establishing a research community to share and promote professional practice will enhance results.

8.5 *Looking ahead*

Two voices resonated during my fieldwork. One voice sounded carefree: yes, the Internet and its tools are there and our students obviously know better than we do how to make use of it for language learning purposes. The other voice sounded more serious and anxious: it's true that the Internet is a great resource but we feel somewhat at a loss as to how to use it effectively for our teaching (and learning) purposes. A partner class would be wonderful, but how to find one and how to work with it? What if no partner can be found?

In the thesis, these issues and concerns have been discussed and a framework has been proposed for enhancing teachers' as well as learners' understanding of applying an Internet-mediated intercultural approach to teaching and learning. However, taking China's size and diversity into account, I cannot propose this framework as a definitive account of Internet-mediated intercultural teaching and learning, nor do I intend to propose a menu that attempts to answer all the questions. The complexity of institutions and classrooms in China necessitates a more contextualised understanding of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning which endeavours to develop language learners as intercultural speakers (Byram 1997; Kramsch

1998; Corbett 2003). Therefore, it is important to find locally appropriate solutions to local problems (Liu 2007a; Wang 2010).

While this thesis has to end here, the flame of my enthusiasm is still alive and burning. This thesis seeks to invite greater dialogue on the value of an Internet-mediated intercultural approach as a means towards ICC development for Chinese tertiary English language education. I also hope it will be a catalyst for language teachers and students, in China and beyond, who are interested in developing and improving Internet-mediated intercultural language activities. In conclusion, I present an intercultural metaphor:

‘众人拾柴火焰高 (When everybody adds fuel, the flame rises high)’

just as the English saying goes, ‘Many hands make light work’.

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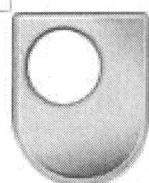
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Appendix A: Letters

Ethics Approval Memo-1



The Open University

From John Oates
Chair, The Open University Human Participants and
Materials Research Ethics Committee
Research School
Email j.m.oates@open.ac.uk
Extension 52395
To Liang Wang CREET
Subject Helping or hindering? A study of Internet-mediated
intercultural language teaching and learning in China's
Higher Education Institutions
Ref HPME C/2008/#442/1
Date 10 June 2008

Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted on 4th June 2008, is approved by the Open University Human Participants and Materials Ethics Committee, subject to satisfactory responses to the following:

You are asked to:

1. If possible, give details of an additional contact person who speaks the participants' native language in case a participant who wants to talk with someone else about your research does not have a good command of English;
2. Confirm that you will gain formal permission for your data collection from the HEI's in which you propose to conduct your research.

At the conclusion of your project, by the date that you stated in your application, the Committee would like to receive a summary report on the progress of this project, any ethical issues that have arisen and how they have been dealt with.

John Oates
Chair, OU HPMEC

Ethics Approval Memos-2

RE: Liang Wang application to HPMEC #442

J.M.Oates

To: L.Wang

Cc: M.N.Lamy; T.W.Lewis; J.A.Coleman; 'Research-ethics@open.ac.uk'

Dear Liang Wang,

Thank you for these assurances, which satisfactorily address the points raised by the review of your application for ethics approval.

I can confirm that your approval is now complete.

I hope that the research goes well.

John Oates
Chair, HPMEC

From: L.Wang

Sent: 10 June 2008 16:17

To: J.M.Oates

Cc: M.N.Lamy; T.W.Lewis; J.A.Coleman; Research-ethics@open.ac.uk

Subject: ??: Liang Wang application to HPMEC #442

Dear John,

As requested, I make the following statements to respond to the two points below:

1) As this research spreads work with different universities across China, it will be difficult to have a fixed role as an informant for the participants as requested. What I can do is to find a suitable contact teacher in each institution I'll be visiting and brief the informant at the first instance.

2) I confirm that before I start visiting those HEIs I will get a formal permission from the department or school head for accessing the staff and students.

I'll note down the main issues regarding ethics in undertaking my work and submit a report when I complete my work.

Many thanks,

Liang

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Initial Contact Letters

RE:Important: Invitation for a research project

liu200002@163.com

To: Liu Wang
You received this message on 07/02/2006 14:27

To: Liu Wang

Respected Mr. Wang,

I'm glad to receive your email and your invitation. My name is Diana, a lecturer from a University in Zhejiang Province, China. I would like to participate your research and investigation, though actually I'm interested in computer-assisted or web-based foreign language teaching and learning, and I'm conducting a project on it at present. To be frank, I don't have a good knowledge of intercultural language teaching and learning. I'm afraid whether I can be of any help to your research. You are welcome to come to the University for further interview, observation for your research during your planned periods. Thank you for your invitation!

Diana

----- Original Message -----

From: "L. Wang" <L.Wang@open.ac.uk>

To: <liu200002@163.com>

Subject: Important: Invitation for a research project

Date: Mon, 7 Jul 2006 14:54:33 +0100

Dear Professors and Colleagues,

My name is Wang Liang (王亮), a PhD student from The Open University, United Kingdom. Further to last year's small-scale survey research on Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning in Chinese tertiary institutions, I am now conducting a PhD research project to explore the inquiry in more depth in order to make the results of the investigation more representative.

I'm writing to invite you to participate and continue your participation (since some of you already offered help last year) in this study. Your informed views and experiences of intercultural activities with the Internet use are particularly important to this study. You are also welcome to recommend your colleagues who have the similar interest in this study to join in. Please do not hesitate to forward this email to them.

The research is in the form of surveys, document/artifact collection, focus group/individual interviews and classroom/online observations. I would like to pay a visit to your institutions for two periods of time between September and December, 2008, and/or February and June, 2009 respectively.

The study has been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Open University. It is assured that your identity will not be revealed in any publications that result from this study and your personal information will be kept strictly confidential. You can have access to your data and a summary copy if you wish.

If you wish to help me with the study, would you please reply to me so that I can arrange an agenda and negotiate my visits with you? An informed consent letter will be sent to you after I receive your reply. Should you have any enquiries, please do feel free to contact me.

Looking forward to your participation!

Liang Wang

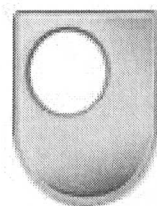
Dept. of Language

Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology

The Open University

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Informed Consent Letter

Title of research project: Helping or hindering? A study of Internet-mediated intercultural language teaching and learning in China's higher education institutions

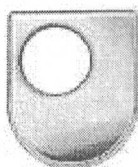
1. You are invited to participate in a case study of the above research project on a voluntary basis. Before you make a decision to participate in it, I wish to inform you of the research purpose and procedure. 我们邀请您以自愿的原则参加关于中国高校跨文化外语教学和网络技术运用的案例调查研究。在决定参加前，您将了解本次研究的目的和程序。
2. The purpose of the study is to gain insights into the current practices in language classes where teachers and learners use the Internet for intercultural language teaching and learning. It also intends to inform teachers and learners about potential models for Internet-mediated intercultural activities by generalizing from some cases. 我们的研究目的是了解目前中国高校师生对网络技术应用用于课堂跨文化外语教育中的实施情况和看法并向师生推荐一些有价值的教学模式。
3. Participation in this study consists of questionnaire surveys, group and individual interviews, classroom and online observations, and document and product collections. It will start with a broad survey and group interviews, followed by individual interviews, observations and document collection. The study will cover two periods of time, i.e. from September to December, 2008, and from February to June, 2009. 案例调查将采用问卷调查，群体和个体访谈，课堂和网上观察以及相关教学文件和活动作品的收集。研究将按照上面罗列顺序进行。本次调查将分两阶段，分别是 2008 年 9 月到 12 月和 2009 年 2 月到 6 月。
4. Your identity will not be revealed in any presentations or publications that result from this study. Your personal information in the study will be kept strictly confidential. 我们在所有刊登研究结果的材料中都不会泄露您的身份，您的所有信息都会获得严格的保密。

5. Possible benefits from participation in this study are: 您在本研究中可以获得一些收获:
- You will have an opportunity to reflect on your teaching and learning experiences; 您将有机会对自己的教学和学习经验进行反思;
 - It will contribute to your knowledge about using the Internet for intercultural foreign language education; 您将了解网络技术应用于跨文化外语教育的有关知识;
 - It will help you improve practices for Internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education. 您将提高以网络为中介的跨文化外语教育的操作认识。
6. There are no known risks to you in the study. Participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate in it and you may withdraw at any time during the survey. Also you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. 该项研究不会对您带来不利后果。您可以自愿参加,也可以在参加过程中退出。如有问题让您不便回答,您可以不回答。
7. If you have questions or concerns at any time about the study, you are welcome to contact the researcher by emailing Liang Wang at L.Wang@open.ac.uk in the first place or alternatively Prof. Jim Coleman at J.A.Coleman@open.ac.uk. 如有疑问,请通过以上方式随时联系。
-

Consent form

- A. I have read this information letter and have understood my role and rights in the research. I hereby grant permission to use the information I provide as data in this research, knowing that it will be kept confidential. 我已阅读此信并明白我在研究中的角色和权利。我明白我的信息将受到保护,因此我同意该研究使用我的信息作为研究数据。
- B. I am willing to be contacted in the future for the ongoing research activities.
Yes (Y) [] No (N) []
- C. Participant's signature: [] Date: []

The Official Letter from the Research School



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23 July 2008

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN


This is to confirm that Mr Liang Wang registered as a full-time internal postgraduate research student at The Open University with effect from 1 October 2007.

Mr Wang's research topic is **Intercultural Foreign Language Education and Internet Mediation**. He is studying under the supervision of Professor JA Coleman, Professor ML Lamy and Dr TW Lewis in the Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology.

As Mr Wang has progressed to his second year, he is now conducting his field work in Chinese Higher Education Institutions as he proposed. We would appreciate if you could afford him necessary support (such as visiting classes, using printing/photocopying service, using library, accessing network, etc.) to his work when he is working at your institution.


If you need further advice, please contact Anita Long, Research Degrees Adviser, either by email research-degrees-CREET@open.ac.uk or phone on 0044 (0)1908 659616, in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

 Catherine Coldbeck
Assistant Registrar
(Research Degrees)

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Online Message to Participants


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[讨论区](#)
[公告](#)
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[About doing the Questionnaire and using Learning Diary documents](#)

[搜索讨论区](#)
[将此问题移至](#)

About doing the Questionnaire and using Learning Diary documents

由W L发表于2009年04月 24日 Friday 15:48

[All learning: 学, 学习, 学习, 学习](#)

 Informed_Consent_Letter.doc

Hi All,

As some of you have already known me, I'm doing my fieldwork with your classes for my PhD study based in the Open University, UK.

Many thanks for your strong interest in and kind help with my work! What I want to learn about you is your learning experiences and perceptions of using the Internet (various tools and functions, such as search engines, communication tools, etc.) for language learning and use for socialization.

In addition to completing an interactive questionnaire (as soon as you can, please), I want to have some interviews with you, both in person or via communication tools. I wish you can volunteer for suggesting interview slots that you are available to me by sending me an email or texting me at 13912704686 before May Day Holiday.

When I'm away (I will visit other universities), I intend to use an interactive learning diary (LD) form to help you/me record and reflect on your work process, especially on an occasion of using the internet for work preparation and presentation.

Please fill in the LD form with details of each activity/action you just take and provide with evidence (e.g. a website link, a conversation log/record regarding the peer discussion between you or some external ones/teachers, or you link the topic to a relevant one from another culture) so that I may have a good picture of how you develop via learning and working with internet technologies.

Please save it and send back to me a copy before your final presentation. I may request an email/QQ-like interview with you for me to have more knowledge about your feelings and experiences of this learning process.

Please note that any communication between us is confidential and your identity will not be revealed to a third person. However, if you think you want some of your voices heard by your teacher, please specify and I will summarize them and forward it without mentioning your names. Your participation in this work will not affect your learning assessment. The attached is an informed consent letter which explains this work in English and Chinese for your reference. You can download it and sign your name, then return it to me if you do want to help me.

Appendix B: Questionnaires (samples)

Questionnaire for students

I am Liang Wang, doing a PhD research at the Open University, UK. This questionnaire is part of my research and it intends to investigate your perceptions and/or practices of using Internet tools for your English language learning. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer them honestly and to your best knowledge. 我叫王亮, 是英国开放大学的在读博士。本问卷是我博士课题的一部份, 旨在了解你在英语教学活动中使用互联网的看法和做法。回答没有对错之分, 根据实际情况回答即可。

This questionnaire consists of three sections. If you DO NOT have any experience of using the Internet for English learning, please complete Section 1 (Perceptions) and Section 3 (Personal information) only. Otherwise, please complete the whole questionnaire sections by following the instructions. After completion, please save and then send it as an attachment to wanglpken@gmail.com. 问卷包括三个部份。如果你在英语学习中没有用过互联网, 只须回答问卷第一、三部份。反之, 请依照指示完成所有部份。完成后请保存并作为附件发到上述邮箱。

Section 1: Please indicate your opinion by checking the box with a cross (X) in the appropriate column. 第一部份: 请在以下表述中选择你认为合适的看法, 在对应的回答框内打“X” (移动鼠标至该框口点击即可。如错选, 重复点击该框取消“X”, 再将鼠标移至另选框处点击。),

1-Strongly disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Agree; 4-Strongly agree

| No. | Statements | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | In general, I think that using the Internet in language classes...总体上, 我认为在语言教学课堂上使用因特网..... | | | |
| | should be an essential element in the textbook-based language class.应该是以课本为基础 的课堂教学中必要的因素。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | should be as important as textbook-based classroom teaching.应该和以课本为基础的课 堂教学一样重要。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | should be complementary to textbook-based classroom teaching.应该是以课本为基础的 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | 课堂教学的补充。 | | | | | | |
| | will be more interesting than textbook-based classroom teaching. 会比以课本为基础的课堂教学更有趣。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be more time-consuming than textbook-based classroom teaching. 会比以课本为基础的课堂教学更费时。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be more rewarding than textbook-based classroom teaching. 会比以课本为基础的课堂教学回报更高。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be less manageable than textbook-based classroom teaching. 会比以课本为基础的课堂教学更难掌控。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be less practical than textbook-based classroom teaching. 比以课本为基础的课堂教 学来得不切实际。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will allow great flexibility to textbook-based classroom teaching. 会比以课本为基础的 课堂教学更灵活。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will encourage more active learning than in textbook-based classroom. 会比以课本为基 础的课堂教学更促进主动学习。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will enable more independent learning than in textbook-based classroom. 会比以课本为 基础的课堂教学更能促进独立性学习。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be distracting from textbook-based classroom teaching. 会使得以课本为基础的课 堂教学受到干扰。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | In my view, using the Internet for learning English can...在我看来, 通过因特网来学习英语能..... | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | enhance my language proficiency in general.总体上提高我的语言水平。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | enable my real language use.真实的使用语言。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | enrich my cultural knowledge.丰富我的文化知识。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | foster my skills in communication 加强我的沟通技能。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | develop my awareness of home culture.增强我的母语文化意识。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | enhance my understanding of the target culture.提高我对目的语文化的理解。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | bring about conflicts in cultural exchanges 导致文化交流中发生冲突。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | I think that the involvement of the Internet in the language class can... 我认为在语言课堂中引入因特网能..... | | | | | |
| | bring more up-to-date materials than the textbook does.比教科书带来更多的最新材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | introduce authentic materials.引入真实的学习材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | enable me to have opportunities for intercultural exchange.让我有机会进行跨文化交流。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | enable me to develop reflective thinking 让我学会反思。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | increase uncertainty in my learning activities.增加我学习中的不确定性。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | increase my anxiety in the language class.加重我在语言课堂上的焦虑感。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 | By using the Internet, I think it is important for my teacher to ... 通过使用因特网, 我认为老师应该..... | | | | | |
| | explore more language materials for us 为我们获取更多的语言学习材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | explore more cultural knowledge for us 为我们获取更多的文化学习材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | instruct to communicate with partners from the target culture.给我们指导如何与目的语文化的同伴进行跨文化交流。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | display online my learning outcomes.展示我的学习成果。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | socialize in the virtual learning community. 和虚拟学习社区社交互动。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | give technical support. 给我们技术支持。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | By using the Internet, I think it is important for me to... 通过使用因特网, 我认为自己应该..... | | | | |
| | search for language learning materials ourselves. 自己获取更多的语言学习材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | search for cultural materials ourselves. 自己获取更多的文化学习材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | communicate with partner classes in line with the teacher's instruction. 在老师的指导下与目的语文化的同伴进行跨文化交流。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | communicate with our own classmates online. 和本班同学网上交流。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | socialize with people from the target culture. 和目的语文化的伙伴社交互动。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | keep a record of my learning outcomes. 保存我的学习成果记录。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | be skilled in Internet technologies. 精通网络技术。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Note: If you don't have any experience in using Internet tools, please skip over Section 2 and continue with Section 3. 如你没有使用因特网的经历, 请跳过第二部分, 直接回答第三部分。

Section 2: Please choose the answers which are the closest to the facts you know about your leaning experience by checking the box with a cross 'X' in the appropriate column. 第二部分: 请在以下选项中选择和你学习经历最接近的表述, 并在相应的回答框内打'X'。

1-Never Applicable 极不符合; 2-Seldom Applicable; 3- Often Applicable; 4-Always Applicable 非常符合

| No. | Statements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | I use the Internet as a tool for... 我使用因特网是为了..... | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | seeking information. 搜寻信息。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | communicating with my classmates 和我班级的同学进行交流。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | communicating with the partner class from the target culture. 和来自目的语文化的伙伴班级交流。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | communicating with the partner class from home culture. 和母语文化中的伙伴班级交流。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | displaying my learning outcomes. 展示我的学习成果。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | others (please specify here) 其他 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | I have the experience of using the following Internet tools: 我有以下使用因特网的经历: | | | | | |
| | browsers and search engines 浏览器和搜索引擎。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | online reference tools (e.g. dictionary, Wikipedia) 网络参照工具 (如网上辞典、维基百科等)。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | text-based web pages 文本网页。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | audio (podcasting) 音频文件。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | vlog (Youtube, Tudou) 视频文件。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | email 电子邮件。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-forum (e.g. discussion board) 网络论坛。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Blog 博客。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | chat-room 聊天室。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | instant messenger (e.g. MSN) 即时聊天。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | videoconferencing 视频会议。 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | Wikis 维基平台。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | other (please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8 | In class, I am engaged in using...在语言课堂上, 我参与以下活动: | | | | | | |
| | online reference tools for vocabulary and grammar learning. 网上参照工具学习词汇和语法。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | browsers and search engines to access information on specific topics. 浏览和搜索引擎获取文化专题信息。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Online audio and video materials. 网上音频视频材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Emails to write to my partner class. 电子邮件和我们的伙伴班级写信。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-forums to discuss topics with my classmates. 网络论坛和本班同学进行讨论。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-forums to discuss topics with my partner classes. 网络论坛和伙伴班级进行讨论。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Chatting facilities (text, voice) to 'talk' to my partners. 聊天(文本, 语音)工具和远程班级'聊天'。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Videoconferencing to talk to my partners. 网络视频会议和远程班级聊天。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Web page or blog for sharing our ideas. 网页或博客交流看法。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Facebook/Hi5/Second Life for socialization. 网络社区(如 Facebook 等)社交互动。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | other (Please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | In self-study time, I like to use...在自学时间里, 我通过..... | | | | | | |
| | online reference tools for vocabulary and grammar learning. 网上参照工具学习词汇和语法。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | browsers and search engines to access information on specific topics. 浏览和搜索引擎获取文化专题信息。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Online audio and video materials. 网上音频视频材料。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | | |
|----|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Emails to write to my partner class. 电子邮件和我们的伙伴班级写信。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-forums to discuss topics with my classmates. 网络论坛和本班同学进行讨论。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-forums to discuss topics with my partner classes. 网络论坛和伙伴班级进行讨论。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Chatting facilities (text, voice) to 'talk' to my partners. 聊天 (文本, 语音) 工具和远程班级 '聊天'。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Videoconferencing to talk to my partners. 网络视频会议和远程班级聊天。 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Web page or blog for sharing our ideas. 网页或博客交流看法。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Facebook/Hi5/Second Life for socialization 网络社区 (如 Facebook 等) 社交互动。 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | other (Please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | The main barriers to using the Internet for learning activities are lack of... | 通过网络工具进行跨文化学习活动的主要障碍是..... | | | | |
| | teacher instruction. 缺少教师指导。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | access to network. 上网机会不够。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | time in class. 课上时间不够。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | time outside class. 课外时间不够。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | technical support. 缺少技术支持。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | participation by my partners. 对方的参与不够。 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | experience in collaborating with partner classes. 缺乏和伙伴班级协作的经验。 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | other (Please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 3: Please complete this section about your personal situation. We need these details to classify responses to the survey, but your identity will never be revealed.第三部分: 请填写你的一些个人情况。此部分仅作问卷分类使用, 你的信息会得到保护。

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 11 | What's your degree you are pursuing now? 你目前的在读学位? | undergraduate |
| 12 | What's your major? 你的专业? | English |
| 13 | How long have you been using Internet? 你的网龄有多长? | 5 years 3 months |
| 14 | Have you been trained for using Internet tools for learning? 你接受过使用网络来学习的培训吗? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | If yes, is the training one-off or ongoing? (If 'No', please skip over) 如接受过, 培训是一站式的还是经常的? (没有请跳过) | One-off <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | Does your class have a website (online space) for teaching and learning activities? 你的班级在网上有网站空间进行教学活动吗? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17 | How much time do you spend on the Internet every day on average? 你每天平均花多少时间上网? | 1 hours |
| 18 | Your name (Surname, First name): 你的姓名 | |
| 19 | Your email/phone 你的电邮、手机电话 | 59@163.com |
| 20 | Your institute 你的学校 | University of Sport |

Thanks for your cooperation! Now please save and then send it to wanglpkcn@gmail.com.

Questionnaire for Teachers

I am Liang Wang, doing a PhD work at the Open University, UK. This questionnaire intends to investigate your perceptions and/or practices of using the Internet for your English language classes. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer them honestly and to your best knowledge.

This questionnaire consists of three sections. If you **DO NOT** have any experience of using the Internet in your teaching practices, please complete **Section 1 (Perceptions)** and **Section 3 (Personal information)** only. Otherwise, please complete the whole questionnaire sections by following the instructions. When you complete it, please save it and send it back to wanglpkcn@gmail.com.

Section 1: Please indicate your opinion by checking the box with a cross (X, move your mouse over the little square box and left click it) in the appropriate column.

1-Strongly disagree; 2-Disagree; 3-Agree; 4-Strongly agree

| No. | Statements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 | In general, I think that using the Internet in language classes... | | | | |
| | should be an essential element in the textbook-based language class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | should be as important as textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | should be complementary to textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be more interesting than textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be more time-consuming than textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be more rewarding than textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be less manageable than textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be less practical than textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | will allow great flexibility to textbook-based classroom teaching | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will encourage more active learning than in textbook-based classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will improve learner autonomy. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | will be distracting from textbook-based classroom teaching. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 | In my view, using the Internet for teaching English can... | | | | | |
| | enhance language proficiency in general | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | enable real language use. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | enrich cultural knowledge. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | foster skills in communication. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | develop awareness of one's home culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | enhance understandings of the target culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | bring about conflicts in cultural exchanges. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 | I think that the involvement of the Internet in the language class can... | | | | | |
| | bring more up-to-date materials than the textbook does | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | introduce authentic materials about the target culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | enable students to have opportunities for authentic communication. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | enable students to develop reflective thinking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | increase uncertainty in organising teaching and learning activities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | increase anxiety in language classes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4 | By using the Internet, I think it is important for me to ... | | | | | | | |
| | explore more language materials for my students. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | explore more cultural knowledge for my students. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | organize my students to have intercultural exchange with partners from the target culture | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | support my students to communicate effectively with partners from the target culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | examine my students' learning outcomes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | help my students to socialize in the virtual learning community. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | provide technical support. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | collaborate effectively with the partner teacher. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 | By using the Internet, I think it is important for my students to... | | | | | | | |
| | search for language learning materials themselves. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | search for cultural materials themselves. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | have intercultural exchange with partner classes in line with my instruction | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | communicate with their own classmates. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | socialize with new people from the target culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | display online their learning outcomes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | be skilled in Internet technologies. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Note: If you don't have any experience in using Internet tools, please skip over Sección 2 and continue with Sección 3.

Section 2: Please choose the answers which are the closest to the facts you know about your teaching experience by checking the box with a cross 'X' in the appropriate column.

1-Never Applicable; 2-Seldom Applicable; 3-Often Applicable; 4-Always Applicable

| No. | Statements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|-----|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6 | In preparing for activities, I like to use the Internet as a tool for ... | | | | |
| | seeking information about linguistic knowledge (lexical and grammatical) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | seeking information about language skills training | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | seeking information about the target cultural knowledge. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | seeking information about home cultural knowledge. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | communicating with my class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | my students to explore more of the target culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | my students to explore more of home culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | my students to communicate with the partner class from the target culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | my students to communicate with the partner class from home culture. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | displaying my class' learning outcomes. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | others (please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 | I like to design online activities in class by using... | | | | |
| | individual Internet tools. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | Online learning system with a distance partner class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | Online learning system (e.g. Blackboard) without a partner class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | Others (please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| 8 | I have the experience of using the following Internet tools for my language class: | | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | browsers and search engines | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | online reference tools (e.g. dictionary, Wikipedia) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | text-based web pages | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | audio (podcasting) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | vlog (Youtube, Tudou) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | email | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-forum (e.g. discussion board) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | blog | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | chat-room | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | instant messenger (e.g. MSN) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | videoconferencing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | wikis | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | other (please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9 | I engage my students in using... | | | | |
| | online reference tools for vocabulary and grammar learning. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | browsers and search engines to access information on specific topics. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | online audio and video materials. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | emails to write to their partner class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

| | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | e-forums to discuss topics with their classmates. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | e-forums to discuss topics with a partner class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | chatting facilities (text, voice) to 'talk' to partners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | videoconferencing to talk to partners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | web page or blog for sharing learners' ideas. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| | facebook/Hi5/Second Life for socialization | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | other (Please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | The main barriers to using Internet tools for intercultural activities are lack of... | | | | |
| | funding. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | access to network. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | time in class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | time outside class. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | technical support. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | pedagogical experience. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | participation by the learners or their partners. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | managerial experience in collaborating with partner teachers. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | other (Please specify here) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Section 3: Please complete this section about your personal situation. We need these details to classify responses to the survey, but your identity will never be revealed.

| | | |
|----|---|--|
| 11 | How long have you been a foreign language teacher? | 17 years <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 months |
| 12 | How long have you been using Internet? | 9 years <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4 months |
| 13 | How long have you been using Internet tools for teaching? | 8 years <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> months |
| 14 | Have you been trained for using Internet tools for teaching? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | If yes, is the training one-off or ongoing? (If 'No', please skip over) | One-off <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ongoing <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | Do you have your website (online space) for teaching and learning activities? | Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17 | How much time do you spend on the Internet every day on average? | 6 hours |
| 18 | Your name (Surname, First name): | |
| 19 | Your email | @yahoo.com.cn |
| 20 | Your institute | University of Sport |

Thanks for your cooperation! Now don't forget to save and send it as an attachment to wanglpkcn@gmail.com.

Appendix C: Interview protocols

(These questions only serve as a guiding line.)

For teachers:

1. What is your institutional interpretation of this goal of developing learners' 'kuawenhua jiaojinengli' (ICC)?
2. What course(s) are you teaching? Regarding your course(s), how would you specify the goal of developing ICC?
3. What network facilities are available for you in your institution and what are the conditions of using network for teaching?
4. What network technologies do you use regularly for teaching activities? How do you feel when using these technologies?
5. Please describe the ICC-oriented activity design involving the use of network (What aims? What tools? Who to use? What sequence? In which situation? What assessment methods? etc.).
6. What are the problems in using network for teaching? What kind of support do you wish to obtain in order to prepare for activities involving the use of network?
7. In what ways does the use of network technologies meet the aims of ICC-oriented teaching and learning activities?
8. Would you please make suggestions to the activities you just described on how to improve it in terms of activity design?

For students:

1. What is your understanding of ‘kuawenhua jiaojinengli’ (ICC) in language learning? How important do you think it is regarding your learning goals?
2. What network facilities are available for you in your institution and what are the conditions of using network for learning?
3. What network technologies do you use regularly for learning activities? How do you feel when using these technologies?
4. In what ways do you think network can help to develop your ICC?
5. Please give an account of the ICC-oriented activity involving the use of network (What aims? What tools? Who to use? What sequence? In which situation? What assessment methods? etc.).
6. In what ways does the use of network technologies meet the aims of ICC-oriented learning activities?
7. What are the problems in using network for teaching? What kind of support do you wish to obtain in order to prepare for activities involving the use of network?
8. Would you please make suggestions to the activities you just described on how to improve it in terms of activity design?

Appendix D: Observational elements (physical and virtual settings)

| | | | |
|--|--|--|---------------|
| 1. Date of observation | | | |
| 3. Institute name | | 2. Reference No. | |
| 5. Instructor profile (code/gender) | | 4. Institute type | O L C J D |
| 7. Class size | | 6. Level of class | BE BNE ME MNE |
| 9. Classroom setting (Location of computers) | | 8. Number of computers | |
| 10. Internet connectivity (broadband) | | 11. Conditions of use (security check, opening times, payment) | |
| 12. Installed software | | 13. Learning management system/Website | |
| 14. Internet tools available | | | |
| 15. Use of tools | | | |
| 16. Description of activity (procedures, duration, participants) | | | |

Appendix E: Learning diary - sample

Online Learning Experiences

The form below is for you to keep a learning diary of what and how you are doing with English learning, especially with the use of Internet tools. By keeping learning diaries, you will have the opportunities to:

- Record and reflect on what you have learned;
- Identify problems you have and what you do to solve them;
- Be able to get additional help.

Once you will have done an activity, please spend about 15 minutes filling in this form and save a copy to yourself (you need to copy the blank form for next use). Also please email a copy to wanglpkcn@gmail.com so that some feedback regarding your diary will be returned and your learning diary will be developed into learning dialog journal.

Your diaries will be helpful for giving a sense of your experience related to the use of Internet tools for English learning process. Please write in the following items to the best understanding you can. You are expected to provide evidences.

| Diary of English Learning Experiences | |
|--|--|
| Date written/sent: | 20090421 |
| Topic | Visual literacy |
| Objectives | Presentation for IC course |
| Location of learning | home, dorm and library |
| Context of learning (individual/collaborative) | mostly Individual |
| Online tools (if any) | google, email |
| Experience (actions, problems, achievements, your thought, feeling, etc) | Browse websites provided be our professor, Googled some info on relevent subjects, esp the ad photos Feeling: internet tools seem to be quite essential to our presentation preparation. |
| Copies from online learning records (e.g. chat logs, key searched words and useful URLs) | >>> http://www.pomona.edu/Academics/courserelated/classprojects/Visual-lit/intro >> /intro.html; http://www.museumca.org/picturethis/visual.html >> http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/worth/svscom.html >> http://www.uiowa.edu/~commstud/resources/visualsites.html >> http://commfaculty.fullerton.edu/lester/courses/viscomlinks.html >> http://www.wadsworth.com/communication_d/templates/student_resources/053459 >> 7068_massey/media_literacy/index.html >> http://power-points.blogspot.com/2005/09/really-bad-powerpoint-and-how-to-avoid.html >> oid.html |

Appendix F: Resources

For academic networking and development:

The Intercultural Communication Institute: <http://www.intercultural.org/>

Intercultural Communication Special Interest Group (BAAL):
<http://baalicsig.wordpress.com/>

International Association for Language and Intercultural Communication:
<http://www3.unileon.es/grupos/ialic/>

CultNet: <http://cultnetworld.wordpress.com/>

For theories, practices, and resources:

Language Learning and Technology: <http://llt.msu.edu/>

Intercultural Competence Assessment (INCA project):
<http://www.incaproject.org/index.htm>

Global People: <http://www.globalpeople.org.uk/>

Robert O'Dowd's homepage: <http://www3.unileon.es/personal/wwdfmrod/>

Culturally Authentic Pictorial Lexicon: <http://capl.washjeff.edu/index.php>

Web Use Project: <http://www.webuse.org/>

Intercultural Email Classroom Connections: <http://www.friends-partners.org/CCSI/penpals/iecc.htm>

'ePals' website: <http://www.epals.com>